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Genuine Populist: William V. Allen in the United States Senate, 1893-1901

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GENUINE POPULIST: WILLIAM V. ALLEN IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE, 1893-1901

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This study examines the United States Senate career of Nebraska Populist William Vincent Allen (1893-1901). A relatively neglected figure in Populist historiography, Allen has been the subject of widely divergent opinions on the part of those historians who have commented on his place in the movement.

The dominant view reflected in the published literature is that Allen, who was elected with the help of Democratic votes in the Nebraska legislature, was, ideologically and politically, more of a Democrat than a Populist. On this view, Allen's principal policy concern was promoting the cause of free silver coinage, and his primary political orientation was to follow the lead of the Bryan wing of the Democratic Party. Historians in this camp see Allen as a pseudo-Populist at best.

But several other scholars view Allen as a true Populist. While not denying Allen's emphasis on free silver, a dedication to which Populists shared with Bryanite Democrats, or his support of Populist-Democratic fusion, these historians have argued that Allen's detractors have overlooked evidence pointing to his commitment to other Populist concerns such as nationalization of the railroads.

The present study, based on the Allen Papers at the Nebraska State Historical Society, the Congressional Record, and the relevant secondary literature, attempts to answer the question of whether Allen was a real Populist. The focus is on Allen's Senate activities, but it also briefly addresses the Nebraska Senator's much-maligned political positions. It is primarily concerned with how Allen's thought and efforts matched up with the Omaha Platform promulgated at the People's Party National Convention in 1892.

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INTRODUCTION

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> Just what constitutes truth in history is an epistemological problem of very great difficulty.
>
> Kenneth Boulding, A Primer of Social Dynamics: History as Dialectics and Development

Of the seven United States Senators who represented the People's Party during the 1890s, Nebraska's William V. Allen had the longest tenure.[1] Elected in 1893, Allen was a particularly energetic legislator, as active perhaps as any contemporary figure in the Senate. During his seven years in office he always identified himself as a Populist, and rhetorically he continued to express his allegiance to the explicit demands of the 1892 Omaha Platform of the People's Party.

Still, historians of Populism have taken relatively little notice of Allen's legislative career, and only a handful have given him more than passing attention. Nevertheless they have reached very disparate interpretations of Allen's relationship to the movement, some insisting that he was not really a Populist at all.

The earliest appraisal of Allen was brief but favorable. In 1928, John D. Hicks wrote that in the Senate Allen displayed "unusual resourcefulness," and that some of his

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[1] The others were William Alfred Peffer of Kansas (1891-97), James Kyle of South Dakota (1891-1901, the last three years of Kyle's tenure were spent as a Republican), Marion Butler of North Carolina (1895-1901), William A. Harris of Kansas (1897-1903), Henry Heitfeld of Idaho (1897-1903), and George Turner of Washington (1897-1901). Gene Clanton, Congressional Populism and the Crisis of the 1890s (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 77, 87, 98, 123, 146, 175-76; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971, document 92-8, 92nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), 509.

accomplishments were notable.[2] In his classic The Populist Revolt (1931), Hicks went further, contending that the "honest" and "incorruptible" Allen was not only a "genuine Populist," but also "the ablest man" of his party in Nebraska.[3]

Subsequently, however, most historians have not shared Hicks' positive assessment of the man. In 1974, in his Populism and Politics, Peter Argersinger viewed Allen as a "nominal Populist" who, by at least 1896, had become more dedicated to Populist-Democratic fusion and to the "panacea" of free silver than to the principles of the People's Party.[4] For him, Allen was an opportunistic politician who in 1896 exercised his role as permanent chairman of the Populist National Convention at St. Louis in duplicitous fashion. There he contributed to what Argersinger sees as the pernicious success of fusionists in winning the party's presidential nomination for Democrat William Jennings Bryan.[5]

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[2] John D. Hicks, "Allen, William Vincent," in Allen Johnson, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 214.

[3] John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (1931; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 282-83 (for the "honest" and "incorruptible" quotations), 285 (for the "ablest" quotation), 316 (for the "genuine" quotation). Two later, unpublished studies saw Allen the same way: Allen was "probably the most capable Populist who was sent to Washington. His ability to hold his own in Senate debates against the leaders of the major parties brought joy to the hearts of all Populists." Clarence Nelson Roberts, "A Congressional History of the Populists" (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri, 1936), 14; "Allen's debates and voting in the Senate illustrate that he was sincere in his convictions, and that he was a genuine Populist." Richard N. Kottman, "An Analysis of the People's Party Delegation in Congress, 1891-1897" (M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1954), 40.

[4] Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 247, 289.

[5] Ibid., 112, 264-65. See also 199-200, 202, 204-05, 211, 227-28, 245, 252, 260-61, 292, 310. That Allen formally exercised this important function at all was, Argersinger writes, in violation of the party's Omaha Ordinance of 1892, which proscribed the involvement of office-holders in party conventions.

In a more detailed 1976 assessment of Allen's Populist role, Lawrence Goodwyn reached conclusions virtually identical to Argersinger's. In his influential Democratic Promise, Goodwyn alleged that Allen was the "archetype" of a peculiar and novel class of politician: the pseudo-Populist. According to Goodwyn, since Allen understood neither the logic of the Populist program nor the reasons for its emergence in his own state, he never felt particularly committed to the Omaha Platform.[6] Thus Allen routinely ignored important Populist concerns such as greenbackism and nationalization of the railroads; he advocated the orthodox position of the gold advocates on ultimate redemption (the practice of basing currency values on redeemable precious metals); and he dismissed central Populist tenets such as radical reform of the national bank network, the duopolistic party order, and the inveterate "system of corporate influence over the democratic process itself" as tangential, even irrelevant, to the aims of Populism.[7]

Goodwyn contends that Allen made the promotion of free silver his top reform priority, indeed, that he placed it before the needs of his party, because he viewed it as essential to his future election prospects.[8] Moreover, since Allen's ideology was indistinguishable from that of reform-Democrat William Jennings Bryan, he advocated fusion with the Democracy wherever possible.[9] That strategy, Goodwyn suggests, and

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[6] Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) 392, 426-27.

[7] Ibid., 392-93, 400. The political duopoly consisted of the familiar pattern of the dominance of politics by the Democratic and Republican parties.

[8] Ibid., 396-401, 426-27.

[9] Ibid., 401, 440, 442, 461, 474-75, 477, 480-81, 494, 497, 499, 507, 558. This view of Allen as philosophically tainted Populist is shared by Robert C. McMath, Jr., who refers to Allen as a "Democratic-

Allen's corrupt handling of his chairmanship duties at the 1896 People's Party National Convention, did much to bring about the disintegration of the party.[10] All of this, as well as Allen's initial election, serves for Goodwyn as conclusive evidence of the shallow nature of Nebraska Populism, an "issueless" (save for silver) "shadow-movement" that was nothing more than a vague mugwumpish impulse on the part of some passionless, uninspired men to create a more honest government.[11]

In another 1976 study, Western Populism, Karel Bicha explored Allen's role. Unlike Argersinger and Goodwyn, who displayed interest only in Allen's impact on the party organization, Bicha studied Allen's Senate career in some depth. That difference notwithstanding, Bicha's view of Allen closely matches those of his 1970s counterparts.[12]

Bicha denies that Allen was ever more than slightly enthusiastic about the People's Party or its platform. Rather, Allen was a user of, as opposed to a believer in, political trends; a man whose "third party disposition" prior to 1890 "was either latent or altogether dormant." This Nebraskan who called himself a Populist was in fact "ideologically and personally...uncomfortable in Populist circles," where he was

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Populist senator" because of Allen's emphasis on free silver and his advocacy of fusion. See American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 199.

[10] Goodwyn, Democratic Promise, 485-92.

[11] Ibid., 394, 396, 400. For an illuminating assessment of Goodwyn's one-sided treatment of Nebraska Populism, see Robert W. Cherny, "Lawrence Goodwyn and Nebraska Populism: A Review Essay," Great Plains Quarterly 1, no. 3 (Summer 1981), 181-194.

[12] Karel Bicha, Western Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent Conservatism (Lawrence, Kan.: Coronado Press, 1976).

"reserved and aloof toward" other members of the party.[13] Never really a believer, Allen was, save "for his role as a theoretician of monetary policy...a non-Populist."[14]

By noting that Allen did embrace the "monetary and coinage sections" of the Omaha Platform, however, Bicha tacitly admits that Allen was a Populist to the extent that he accepted the party's monetary program. Furthermore, Bicha gives Allen credit for being "a competent and thoughtful monetary authority," and notes that in the Senate, his thoughts on the subject "were distinctly well considered and elaborately articulated." Whereas Goodwyn condemns Allen for failing to take up "greenback monetary analysis," Bicha writes that with his "severely instrumentalist view of money," his vehement denial of intrinsic value, his call for an expansion of the money supply, his anti-gold stance, and his intellectual debt to monetary theorist Edward Kellogg, whose writings had provided the theoretical basis of the Greenback monetary critique, Allen "could easily have defended Greenback ideas." Contrary to Goodwyn, who had likened Allen's monetary views to those of the "gold monometallist," Bicha explained that Allen's basic position "was a specific repudiation of the monetary orthodoxy of his day."[15]

According to Bicha, however, Allen's negative qualities effectively undercut any potential he might have had to aid the Populist movement. His pronounced distrust of the British, his conspiratorial mind-set, "myopia," deep-rooted "pomposity," and

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[13] Ibid., 43-44.

[14] Ibid., 52.

[15] Ibid., 44-46; Goodwyn, 15-16, 392.

especially his lack of commitment to "the cause," represented "a nearly complete contradiction" of the principles of the People's Party. Bicha suggests that, by 1895, Allen had tired of his underachieving party and that, as a "powerless representative of a declining movement after 1896, Allen was in a real sense a long-term lame-duck." The Nebraskan was, Bicha concluded with a sense of finality, "a rather tragic and certainly misplaced figure."[16]

Populist historian Gene Clanton has challenged these negative assessments. In a highly critical review of Western Populism, Clanton describes Bicha's portrayal of Allen as a "caricature." To Clanton, Allen is an instructive example of the "diversity" within the Populist movement as opposed to "the conservative monolith" sketched by Bicha.[17] In a subsequent article in which he used the behavior of early congressional Populists to test the conclusions of both Bicha and Goodwyn, Clanton found Allen to be an authentic representative of the Populist reform impulse. Clanton pointed to one specific speech Allen gave during the first session of his term and suggested that, "by itself," it "is a

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[16] Bicha, 44 (for "contradiction" quotation), 46-48. For all other quotations, see 51-52. That Bicha faults Allen for his anglophobia and visions of a gold conspiracy, apparently suggesting these reflect the inauthenticity of Allen's Populism, is rather curious. States the Omaha Platform: "A vast [plutocratic] conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking possession of the world." Contemporaries would have understood "on two continents" to mean, more or less, Wall Street and Lombard Street, the financial hubs of New York and London respectively. For the Omaha Platform see National Party Platforms: Volume 1 1840-1956, compiled by Donald Bruce Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 89-91 (quotation on p. 90). For a discussion that casts Populist conspiratorial thinking in a negative light, see Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 70-81. For a more sympathetic account see Jeffrey Ostler, "The Rhetoric of Conspiracy and the Formation of Kansas Populism," Agricultural History 69 (1995): 1-27.

[17] Gene Clanton, review of Western Populism, by Karel D. Bicha, Journal of American History 64 (1977), 813. Ronald J. Fahl, a former student of Clanton's, also criticized Bicha's assessment of Allen. The Nebraskan, Fahl contends, was both dedicated to Populism and unrelenting in his efforts to advance its goals. See Fahl's review of Western Populism, Pacific Northwest Quarterly 69 (1978): 138-139.

revelation and persuasive testimony that Goodwyn all too easily banished Nebraska Populists from the ranks of genuine Populism."[18] Elsewhere Clanton has referred to Allen as, in language reminiscent of John Hicks, one of three "outstanding" Populist senators,[19] and as, "arguably, Populism's most talented and respected advocate on Capitol Hill."[20]

Clanton's latest published work reinforces his previous assessments. In his 1998 Congressional Populism and the Crisis of the 1890s, he observes that Allen was a sincere advocate of labor and the poor, and presents evidence that, Goodwyn's claims to the contrary notwithstanding, the Nebraska senator did in fact support federal government ownership of the railroads, thus meeting one of the important litmus tests for Populist legitimacy.[21] On this question of "What exactly made one a Populist?," Clanton writes that, of the assorted elements involved, "none was stronger" than the conviction that "people were," ultimately, "of equal worth." And on different occasions Allen expressed this idea "more clearly than others. He especially deplored elitism and notions of

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[18] Gene Clanton, "'Hayseed Socialism' on the Hill: Congressional Populism, 1891-1895," Western Historical Quarterly 15 (1984): 139-162. The quotation appears on p. 159. Clanton's reference is to Allen's fourteen-hour speech given during the October 1893 filibuster against the proposal to repeal the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. That speech is covered in detail in chapter two below.

[19] Gene Clanton, "Populism," in The Encyclopedia of the United States Congress, ed. Donald C. Bacon, Roger H. Davidson, and Morton Keller (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), vol. 3, 1569. The other two were William Alfred Peffer of Kansas and North Carolina's Marion Butler.

[20] Gene Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 103.

[21] Clanton, Congressional Populism, 63, 70-71, 77, 130, 204; on the railroad issue, see 100, 123-25, 135.

hierarchy grounded on position and wealth, and he never failed to take issue with those who implied otherwise."[22]

Populist historians, then, have been as divided in their perception of Allen's relationship to the movement as were observers who, in the early months of 1893, speculated about what course the Senator-elect would take in Washington. As there seems to be general agreement that Allen was a significant figure in the party, the existing polarization of opinion about him suggests that the question of whether Allen truly qualifies as a Populist is an important one.

This study presents a reinterpretation of this basic problem. In doing so, it will first trace in detail what Allen did and said as a United States Senator. This is an essential first step, for there exists no comprehensive study of Allen's Senate career.[23] In addition to providing a solid evidential foundation on which to formulate an interpretation, this treatment seeks to correct some of the errors scholars have made regarding Allen's career. Working from this expanded knowledge of the positions he advocated, we will compare these to the imperatives of the Omaha Platform in order to measure Allen's Populism.

Because our chief interest is in analyzing Allen's record as a *Populist* senator, this study is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all of his activities in and outside Congress. Instead, it focuses selectively on Allen's handling of issues germane to the Populist reform program. Therefore, although it will summarize Allen's staunch anti-

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[22] Ibid., 91.

[23] The only effort to detail Allen's political career is Mittie Young Scott, "The Life and Political Career of William Vincent Allen" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1927).

imperialism, it will not examine in detail his views and efforts on foreign policy matters. Foreign affairs were far from irrelevant to Populism. The United States' expansionist adventures in the 1890s raised questions about not only human freedom--a central concern of Populist ideology--but also about the relationship between the international-related financial machinations of American and European financiers, the formulation of American policy, and the domestic economic ramifications for farmers and laborers. Nonetheless, in terms of the stated goals and concerns of the People's Party, foreign affairs were peripheral.

Because Allen's influence on the shaping of the party's political approach is important to a proper assessment of his performance as a Populist, this study will offer a brief assessment of the merits of Allen's advocacy of fusion politics. However, because fusion was chiefly a matter of political strategy, one about which Populists disagreed, and as most of Allen's energies were expended in the realm of legislative policy, this analysis will focus on the least-studied aspect of his "Populist" career, his domestic policy-related Senate activities. The result should provide a more balanced assessment of Allen's place in America's most famous third party movement.

CHAPTER ONE

The Agrarian Revolt and the Nebraska Senatorial Election of 1893

> [M]illionaires...[have accumulated] dangerous aggregations of wealth...through class laws or the violations of law...and speculations, so well known to the crafty and unscrupulous, while on agriculture and other forms of industry have fallen all the losses...
>
> The old parties of rapacious greed...will not afford relief. Is it any wonder that society is organizing against this new form of tyranny...and that a new political party is rapidly forming for defensive purposes?
>
> [The] new party, rising and growing through great public exigencies, will build or find a new man as the champion to enforce its demands.
>
> Populist Congressman John Davis of Kansas, "Communism of Capital—The Real Issue Before the People," The Arena, September 1892.

From the achievement of statehood in 1867 until the close of the 1880s the Republican Party was the preponderant political force in Nebraska. Apparent economic prosperity, the stalwart loyalty of former Union soldiers to the party of Lincoln, incessant Democratic factionalism and the party's earlier opposition to the Homestead Act, all worked to ensure Republican dominance at the polls.[1]

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[1] James C. Olson, History of Nebraska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 208-211; Stanley B. Parsons, The Populist Context: Rural Versus Urban Power on a Great Plains Frontier (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973), 16. On exceptions to Republican unity, see Parsons, 5-6. For informative discussions of the major parties in Nebraska during this period, see See Robert W. Cherny, Populism, Progressivism, and the Transformation of Nebraska Politics, 1885-1915 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 1-31; Jeffrey Ostler, Prairie Populism: The Fate of Agrarian Radicalism in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, 1880-1892 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 72-90; and "Travails of the Democracy: 1868-1890," chapter two of James F. Pedersen and Kenneth D. Wald, Shall the People Rule?:

During this period Republican officials and Democratic leaders alike were much concerned with promoting the development of the state's economy. Consequently they focused their efforts on economic stimulus and capital accumulation. As Stanley Parsons has observed, during the 1880s legislative initiatives, excepting "prohibition and other cultural issues," dealt primarily with generating an environment for economic growth.[2]

Under the Republicans' watch there was indeed some economic prosperity. In the 1880s Nebraska's population more than doubled to just over one million, and the value of the state's manufactured goods increased by seven times. Agriculture, which had long constituted the largest sector of the economy, also grew apace. Food production increased by 200 percent, owing to the suitability of the eastern lands for corn-growing, relatively high rainfall levels, and the introduction of improved farm machinery.[3] In the decade agricultural expansion transformed Nebraska, as historian James C. Olson has put it, from an unsettled "frontier to a major food producing area."[4] Perceived prosperity, Olson writes, induced among the people a heady optimism.

> Progress was in the air. The good crops, the railroads, the growing population all suggested great things. Any town could become a commercial center or a great railway metropolis, or both. A score of villages coveted the state capital, and not a few believed that in time the greatness of the new West would

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A History of the Democratic Party in Nebraska Politics, 1854-1972 (Lincoln, Nebraska: Jacob North, Inc., 1972) 43-78. For useful overviews of the parties on the national scene, see Lewis L. Gould, "The Republican Search for a National Majority," and R. Hal Williams, "'Dry Bones and Dead Language': The Democratic Party," both in The Gilded Age, ed. H. Wayne Morgan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970), 171-87 (Gould), 129-48 (Williams).

[2] Parsons, 4-5.

[3] Olson, 195-200.

[4] Ibid., 196. During the 1870s and 1880s the Republicans helped Nebraska farmers by passing several laws promoting agricultural development. See Cherny, Populism, Progressivism, 13-14.

> necessitate the abandonment of Washington for a national headquarters on the Plains. Raw villages indulged in rosy dreams of greatness, and gas lights twinkled where the coyotes should have been left undisturbed.[5]

Ultimately, however, the farmers of the state recognized that the particles of progress were inequitably dispersed. They were thickest in the air circulating through Nebraska's towns and cities, where speculation, commerce, and industrial expansion had produced a far greater level of material and financial enrichment than was evident in the countryside. During the prosperous 1880s, urban businessmen were generally able to sell their wares at a profit, while many farmers, due to low and steadily falling prices for their products, found themselves operating at a loss.[6]

Ironically, during the mid-1880s farming operations themselves were highly productive. Nebraska agriculture had profited greatly from vast increases in real estate values,[7] and "land was available, money was easy, and crops were plentiful."[8] Indeed, the 1889 bumper crop was "the best in a decade" of successful harvests. But it earned for farmers "some of the lowest prices...yet received," and led them to question seriously the fairness of a system whereby higher yields resulted in lower financial returns. Their skepticism and anger grew as the incomes of many farmers fell far behind the cost demands of production, transportation, taxes and credit.[9] The roots of this disparity

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[5] Olson, 203. For a corresponding expression of this point, see Cherny, Populist and Progressive, 38.

[6] Olson, 177, 200-204, 207, 211-12; Parsons, 146.

[7] Parsons, 22.

[8] Olson, 207.

[9] Ibid., 220; Parsons, 146.

between the economic position of the farmer and that of other Nebraskans reached as far back as the panic of 1873, which spawned a nationwide depression and caused farm commodity prices to plummet. Although economic hardship was pervasive and not limited to agriculture, by 1880 the crisis had subsided in most parts of the economy. In some farming regions, however, including much of central Nebraska, the depressed conditions persisted for nearly two more decades.[10]

One of the bulwarks of the agrarian response to the marginalization and depression of much of the farming community was the development of an explanatory critique which, while hyperbolic in its premises, pointed toward some of the fundamental aspects of the problem. It held that the farmer's woes could be traced to unreasonable interest charges, exorbitant railroad rates, and deflation, factors which, if not so oppressive as the farmer professed, nevertheless claimed an inordinate share of his income. The precipitous fall in the prices of foodstuffs had left indebted farmers severely undercapitalized, and for them the collapse of the land boom in 1888 was disastrous. Problems which theretofore had been barely manageable, such as the chattel mortgage and other credit burdens, the large expense of sending products to markets both in America and Europe, and the adverse effects of monetary appreciation on fixed costs, were now intractable in the face of "fifty-cent wheat...twenty-cent corn, and fifteen-cent oats."[11]

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[10] George Brown Tindall and David Shi, America: A Narrative History 3rd ed., vol. 2 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 727; Olson, 174-178, 207.

[11] Olson, 220. See also Parsons, 22-31, 145-146; David S. Trask, "Nebraska Populism as a Response to Environmental and Political Problems," in The Great Plains: Environment and Culture, eds.

Farmers were responsible for their lot insofar as misplaced optimism had prompted many of them to borrow money extravagantly. Whatever their level of culpability may have been in generating the crisis, farmers were now faced the stark reality of burdensome debt, of prices so low that a number of farmers found it less expensive to convert their corn into fuel rather than market it, of a rise in the number of abandoned and physically neglected structures, and of a marked increase in farm repossessions. To the "harassed little country businessman," it now seemed that genuine recovery would require governmental intervention aimed at curbing the abusive practices of railroads, moneylenders, and monopolists.[12]

But from the major party politicos no assistance was forthcoming. There was little difference in the economic philosophies of the Democrats and Republicans, neither of which produced programs to effectively relieve the plight of the farmer. And, as a palpable demonstration of the "great consensus" between them on economic thought, both focused on maximizing the growth of the economy and investments.[13] Even the

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Brian W. Blouet and Frederick C. Luebke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 61-80. Jeffrey Ostler, citing an 1893 U.S. Senate report, notes that at the beginning of 1890 prices on wheat and corn in New York were at the lowest January level since the Civil War, and that post-war hog and cattle prices for that month had each been lower on only one previous occasion. See Ostler, Prairie Populism, 214, note 5.

[12] Cherny, 31; Olson, 207-208, 211-21; Parsons, 22-31. The "country businessman" expression is from Richard Hofstadter's The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 46.

[13] Parsons, 21, 4-5; R. Hal Williams, Years of Decision: American Politics in the 1890s (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 5-7, 10-11; Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion, 1890-1900 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 105-06; Richard F. Bensel, Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880-1980 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 62-73. The most important policy differences, these authors note, were on the tariff (Republicans were staunchly protectionist and the Democrats moderately so; the Democracy came to favor free trade and a tariff for revenue only, but not until 1887); and on the proper extent of federal power (the GOP was for a centralized, modestly activist role; the Democracy for an anti-centralist laissez faire government).

reformers among them, such as Edward Rosewater, Republican editor of the Omaha Bee, were little concerned with farmer interests. Rosewater, a passionate yet myopic reformer, shared with the vast majority of Nebraska's political elite a devotion to commercial and industrial expansion that precluded any real criticism of the prevailing economic order.[14] Moreover, the Democrats were less disposed to address the farm crisis than were the Republicans, who were dominant in the areas of farm discontent. The Democrats' strength, and that of the Bourbons in particular, was concentrated in the towns and cities, including Omaha, and in the state's "more prosperous" locales.[15] Blinded by the status quo, major-party adherents in Nebraska were insensitive, and generally unresponsive to, the special concerns of the farmer.[16]

Insofar as farm problems were remediable by government, their solution was in the hands of the businessmen and professionals who dominated politics at both the county and state levels. While "not militantly antagonistic" to the interests of the farmer, these leaders "always evaluated them in the light of village and city needs."[17] Thus, any compassion politicians felt for farmers, and any inclination they had to support the agrarians' reform proposals were moderated by the fear that the benefits of reform would not compensate for the detrimental effects likely to result from the alienation of eastern

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[14] Parsons, 12.

[15] Ibid., 14.

[16] Ibid., 146.

[17] Ibid., 21, 146.

investors.[18] Not surprisingly then, the state government "basically responded to urban and village interests and needs."[19] Lacking an effective political voice, the farmer was "often left to complain."[20]

If Nebraska farmers were "outmaneuvered, outfought and outwitted by more sophisticated" town and city lobbies "who were more in tune with the growing industrial and commercial economy,"[21] they nevertheless mounted a serious and increasingly militant campaign to promote their common financial interests. The early institutional products of this movement, the Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry (1869-1876), and the Farmer's Alliance (1880-1900), were nonpartisan ventures which worked to enhance education, stimulate social solidarity and, especially, to ameliorate the financial situation of farmers. The Grange attempted to establish a viable network for the cooperative purchase and sale of crops and equipment without much success. More effective was the Farmer's Alliance, an interest group which, in addition to forming cooperatives, fought for transportation and corporate reform. By 1890 the Nebraska Alliance had hundreds of chapters, an active state organization, and an official organ, the Farmer's Alliance, a

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[18] Ibid., 5.

[19] Ibid., 147.

[20] Ibid., 21.

[21] Ibid., 145. Farmers faced unique conditions which limited their involvement in the political process, including the demands of "constant husbandry," the existing limits of communication, and the distances to centers of political power. See ibid., 146.

spirited newspaper that would play a role of some import in the political debates of the 1890s.[22]

But government still failed to respond, and in the late 1880s some Alliancemen began to agitate for independent political action and, as Olson explains, "many people joined the Alliance precisely because they expected independent action to be taken."[23] When the price debacle of 1889 was followed by a severe drought in 1890, the Alliance set its ship on a direct course for the turbulent waters of Nebraska politics. In late July, a convention of reform groups, dominated by delegates of the Alliance, launched the Nebraska "People's Independent Party."[24]

Presently, the People's party not only demonstrated that it was a force to be reckoned with, but also helped to generate a radical transformation of the state's political landscape. In the November 1890 elections, Independents (or "Populists" as they came

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[22] Olson, 177-78, 216-18; Parsons, 145.

[23] Olson, 218.

[24] Ibid., 218-223. Why didn't the disenchanted turn to the Democratic Party? One historian's answer, referring to the national situation but probably just as applicable to Nebraska, explained that Cleveland's first administration (1885-1889) had left the Democracy and the GOP "equally distrusted." Each was thought to be a tool of eastern financial interests. See Harry Thurston Peck, Twenty Years of the Republic: 1885-1905 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1917), 270. Olson (p. 218) notes that in Nebraska, Democrats were remembered as having been on the wrong side in the Civil War, and, for Protestant farmers, the large proportion of Catholics and anti-prohibitionists in the party made it an unacceptable option. The foregoing suggests that in order to understand the dynamics of agrarian politicization it is necessary to recognize that economics was not the only force directing voter choices. Indeed, several historians have argued that ethnocultural and religious factors were dominant. Cherny contends that during the 1880s Nebraska's "Democratic party...was largely a single-interest [i.e. anti-prohibition] party." Cherny's analysis, however, demonstrates that ethnic, cultural, and economic factors were inextricably linked. See Cherny, 14-31. On the other hand, to Nebraskans who were angry the "Republicans, because of their treatment of all who expressed progressive ideas, seemed equally hopeless." See Olson, 218. For an explanation that focuses on party competition, see Ostler, 72-133. For useful insights into all of these matters, see Ronald Briel, "Preface to Populism: A Social Analysis of Minor Parties in Nebraska Politics, 1876-1890" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska Lincoln, 1981).

to be called) were elected to majorities in both houses of the legislature and won two of Nebraska's three congressional races. Republican losses were even more remarkable than Populist gains, as William Jennings Bryan took the remaining congressional seat, and James E. Boyd became the first Democrat to be elected Nebraska governor.[25] Although in 1892 the GOP regained the governorship and the legislature, the Populist congressmen were reelected, and the party continued to enjoy a large following. Despite the recent setback the faithful endeavored to continue their efforts to bring more "People's" representatives into positions of influence.[26]

The Populists soon had a golden opportunity to do just that. The most important order of business for the newly elected legislature was the selection of a United States Senator. In the joint balloting held by the senate and house, the Republicans held a plurality of nine votes over the Populists, sixty-two to fifty-three. But with the GOP lacking a majority, the Populists could take the election by cooperating with the Democrats, who had eighteen members.[27] Ultimately, they succeeded in just that fashion.

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[25] Olson, 226.

[26] Ibid., 229.

[27] Albert Watkins, History of Nebraska: From the Earliest Explorations to the Present Time, vol. 3 (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1913), 247-48. Sheldon reports that at the beginning of the session, bicameral membership was as follows: R-63, I-53, and D-17. There were, however, some changes in the membership during January. Paolo E. Coletta notes that one Populist legislator died, and Watkins' account, which reports a Democratic membership of 18 at the time of the final voting, appears to be reliable. Parenthetically, Coletta is incorrect when he writes that the Republicans held 53 seats. In fact, they held 62. See Addison E. Sheldon, "Nebraskans I Have Known," Nebraska History 19 (1938): 195; and, Coletta, "William Jennings Bryan and the Nebraska Senatorial Election of 1893," Nebraska History 31 (1950): 188-189, 197.

The political composition of the legislature dictated that the Populists select their candidate with great care. Party support initially went to "stereotype Populist" John H. Powers, a farmer, lay evangelist, and president of the Nebraska Farmer's Alliance.[28] After twelve ballots, Powers was dropped in favor of William L. Greene of Kearney. On the sixteenth ballot the Populists, in an attempt to draw Democratic support, turned to William V. Allen.[29]

Some students of Nebraska history have seen the Populists' support of Allen, along with their nomination in 1892 of Charles H. Van Wyck for governor, as representing an important shift in the party's political strategy. Van Wyck was an antimonopolist and former reform Republican, a friend and political ally of Edward Rosewater.[30] But in 1890, when Van Wyck was under consideration for the Populist gubernatorial nomination, his reform credentials had not impressed party managers. The New York native, they thought, was too wealthy and had been in politics far too long to serve as standard-bearer of "a common people's movement."[31] The nomination went to Powers, who in the general election made an excellent showing, but nevertheless came

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[28] Cherny, 34, 43; Watkins, 248.

[29] Cherny, 43; Watkins, 248. According to Cherny, Allen was elected on the 16th ballot, when five Democrats "all went over to Allen." Actually, on that ballot the Populists and all but five Democrats switched to Allen. It was on the 18th ballot that the five holdouts gave Allen their support. In addition to Watkins, see the Alliance [Nebraska] Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, Allen papers (hereafter AP), Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter NSHS). All subsequent citations of AP refer to the NSHS collection.

[30] Olson, 210, 228-29; Cherny, 7.

[31] Olson, 222.

up short against Boyd.[32] As a result, the Populist leadership determined that the party was not likely to succeed as a one-dimensional movement; its base of support would have to be broadened so as to extend beyond the discontented farmer. As always in politics, reaching out meant that the party had to become, or, at least, be perceived as having become, more moderate.

Thus came the nominations of Van Wyck, Allen, and, in 1894, Silas A. Holcomb, a somewhat conservative former Democrat and now Populist candidate for governor. These moves had both ideological and class dimensions and were designed to expand the movement by admitting antimonopolists and other reform elements such as reform Republicans and silver Democrats. They were also aimed at eliciting increased support from professionals and businessmen of the middle class.[33]

Allen happened to fall into both of these categories. William V. Allen was born on 28 January 1847 at the "village" of Midway, in Madison County, Ohio.[34] His father, a Methodist minister and, apparently, a missionary to the relocated Cherokee Indians, died

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[32] Ibid., 222-223, 226; Cherny, 39. Cherny notes that virtually all Populist candidates in 1890 were from the Alliance. See p. 50.

[33] Olson, 228-29; Cherny, 50. Historian Karel D. Bicha, apparently taking his cue from David S. Trask, has a different view on the identity of Nebraska's early Populist supporters. The state's "rural Populists," he writes, "do not seem to have" come "from the ranks of depression—vulnerable wheat farmers." Bicha does not, however, explain who did support the party in rural Nebraska. See Bicha, Western Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent Conservatism (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976), 82.

[34] William V. Allen Pension File, see various documents and affidavits (National Archives, Washington D.C.); Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971, document 92-8, 92nd Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 1971), 509. According to the first source, Midway was later called Sedalia. For the "village" quotation, see campaign booklet, n.d. but probably 1917, AP. Contemporary newspaper accounts and later biographical sketches of Allen's life contain much conflicting and erroneous information. There would be no useful purpose in dwelling on the errors and inconsistencies, but a few of the more notable ones will be pointed out. Citations to newspapers in the Allen manuscript collection refer to often-undated clippings.

when William was ten months old.[35] His death, according to one account, left the family "in poor circumstances."[36] Within a few years Allen acquired a stepfather, who, like William's father, was also a Methodist minister.[37] The stepfather was also a farmer and, according to Allen, an active abolitionist who employed the family home as a post on the Underground Railroad.[38]

The family lived what was probably a fairly typical "pioneer existence."[39] When the younger Allen was seven, his family moved to a farm near Nevada, Iowa.[40] Owing to the stepfather's occupation, the family moved frequently, but apparently remained in

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[35] For Allen's father as a Methodist minister, see Watkins, 494; Ida Hinman, The Washington Sketch Book: A Society Souvenir, Supplement (Washington, D.C.: Hartman & Cadick, Printer, 1895), 54. This information, along with the timing of the elder Allen's death, is in a biographical account of W.V. Allen that ran in a number of Nebraska and Iowa newspapers, including the Randolph [Nebraska] Times, 10 Feb. 1893, AP. On Allen's father as a missionary, see Hinman, 5, 54, and the 1917 campaign pamphlet, AP. That Allen's father died when William was ten months old is supported by documents in Allen's pension file, National Archives. According to Mittie Young Scott, an early student of Allen's career, William's father, "Samuel Adams" (she had a more famous historical figure on her mind; William and his father shared surnames) died on 4 Dec. 1847. Scott lists three sources in support of this, none of which contain this date. The date, however, may be accurate, for Scott apparently interviewed several members of Allen's family in the course of her research. See Scott's "The Life and Political Career of William Vincent Allen" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1927), 3. Scott's study is the only effort at a history of Allen's political career.

[36] Randolph Times, 10 Feb. 1893, AP.

[37] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1; Allen pension file, National Archives.

[38] Albert Shaw, "William V. Allen: Populist. A Character Sketch and Interview," Review of Reviews 10 (July 1894): 32-33; London [Ohio] Times, 23 Mar. 1893, AP; John D. Hicks, "Allen, William Vincent," in Allen Johnson, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 214.

[39] Lincoln Call, 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Hicks, "Allen," 214.

[40] Watkins, 494; 1917 campaign pamphlet, AP.

Iowa. Allen attended various public schools, and at some point, worked as a farm laborer.[41]

In 1861, the fourteen-year old Allen attempted to sign up with the Union army, but being below the minimum age requirement of eighteen was turned down.[42] A year later however, Allen, then five feet ten inches tall, succeeded in getting into the Thirty-second Iowa Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Perhaps because of his youth, Allen did not rise above private. Nonetheless, one of his last assignments, as a "guard and courier" for his brigade commander, a Brigadier General, was apparently considered something of an honor.[43] Thirty years later Allen told an interviewer that his military service was "the better part of my education."[44] Whatever else he may have gained from it, his military experience seems to have inculcated in Allen an enormous measure of self-assuredness, one of his most conspicuous traits in the Senate. Allen stated that, during the war

> I learned to estimate men by what they are, not by what they profess to be. Without any boasting or bravado, I can say that no man inspires in me any fear or awe. The fact that he may make this or that pretense or profession never effects me in the least, and this quality of self-possession and sense of being

[41] 1917 campaign pamphlet, AP; Sioux City Journal, 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Lincoln Call, n.d. but probably 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1; Shaw, 33. In his profile of Allen, Shaw wrote that "it seems that [Allen's] stepfather did not live very long after the removal of the family to Iowa." Actually Samual J. Gossard lived until 1900; he died on June 30 at age seventy-eight. See Shaw, 33; Affidavit of Mrs. Malvina R. Leach, Allen pension file, National Archives; Stephen Norris Fellows, History of the Upper Iowa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1856-1906 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Laurence Press Co., 1907), 168, volume in the Upper Iowa University archives.

[42] Sioux City Journal, 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Shaw, 33; Watkins, 494.

[43] Sioux City Journal, 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1 ; 1917 campaign pamphlet, AP; Allen pension file, National Archives; Shaw, 33; Hicks, "Allen," 214. The history of the Thirty-second Regiment is told in John Scott, Story of the Thirty Second Iowa Infantry Volunteers (Nevada, Iowa: self-published, 1896). The book contains a reprint of Allen's account of a battle in which he took part. See ibid., 156-61.

[44] Shaw, 36.

> ready for an emergency is...due to my army experience. Before the war was ended the weaklings were sifted out, and I was in contact with men who were serious and who were virile. It was great experience for a boy.[45]

Upon his discharge from the army in August 1865, Allen returned to Iowa, where he enrolled at Upper Iowa University in Fayette.[46] While there, Allen did some public school teaching.[47]

But he grew impatient. His ambition since boyhood was to become a lawyer, so about one year into his college career, Allen dropped out of school and began his legal training.[48] At West Union, Iowa, Allen studied law under future congressman L.L. Ainsworth and in 1869 was admitted to the bar.[49] In 1870 Allen married Blanche Mott, a recent Upper Iowa student.[50] From 1870 to 1874, he practiced law at Fayette, Oconto, Wisconsin, and West Union, Iowa.[51] In 1874 Allen returned to Ackley, Iowa where, in

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[45] Ibid., 36.

[46] Allen pension file, National Archives.

[47] Shaw, 33. During these years Allen's places of residence included Nashua, Iowa (1865-1866) for "a few months," and Fredericksburg, Iowa "the following winter." See Allen pension file, National Archives.

[48] Shaw, 33; Lincoln Call, 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Watkins, 494; Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1.

[49] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1; 1917 campaign pamphlet, AP; Watkins, 494; "Allen, William Vincent," The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 1st ed., 1907. Ainsworth, an Iowa Democrat, served in congress from 1875-77. Guide to Congress, 4th ed. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1991), Appendix B, p. 4-B.

[50] 1917 campaign pamphlet, AP; Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Upper Iowa University, editions for 1860-62, p. 16 and 1867-68, p. 15, in the archives at UIU. For a flattering though brief discussion of Mrs. Allen, see Hinman, 5 (supplement). Another brief introduction to her, along with a list of the Allen children, is in Winona Evans Reeves, The Blue Book of Nebraska Women (Mexico, Missouri: Missouri Printing & Engraving Co., 1916), 12.

[51] "Men of the Hour," flyer, n.d., AP; Allen pension file, National Archives; advertisement for law firm of Rickel & Allen, at Fayette, Fayette County Iowa, in Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the

1878, antimonopolists and Democrats combined to nominate him for congress in Iowa's fourth district.[52] It was a nomination that, Allen later claimed, "came to me entirely unsought, and was given to me more in a complimentary sense on account of my well known anti-monopoly sentiments."[53] Allen made the race but was soundly defeated by his Republican opponent.[54]

In 1884 Allen moved to Madison, Nebraska.[55] On one occasion, after he had lived in Madison for many years, Allen explained why he had refused numerous job offers he claimed to have received from law firms in New York, Chicago, Omaha, and elsewhere. "I am of the common people," Allen said, "and I prefer to spend my days on earth among them."[56]

He may have preferred to live among common folk, but Allen was also ambitious. When he initially planned his relocation to Madison, Allen conjectured that in Nebraska

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Upper Iowa University, edition for 1871-1872. According to the foregoing sources, Allen spent two years in Oconto and one at West Union.

[52] Allen pension file, National Archives.

[53] Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893. One paper reported that the coalition was composed of Republican antimonopolists and Democrats. See the Lincoln Call, n.d., but probably 8 Feb. 1893, AP.

[54] Congressional Guide to U.S. Elections, 3rd ed. (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1994), 1036. Congressional Directory, 46th Cong., 3rd sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), 22. A.E. Sheldon incorrectly refers to this as "a close election." The Republican candidate received 60.8% of the vote, the Greenback candidate 20.4%, and Allen 18.8%. Bicha reports that Allen was "a reform Republican congressional candidate." In fact, Allen was the candidate of the Democratic Party. Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), 492; Bicha, Western Populism, 44; Scott, 10-11.

[55] Watkins, 494; Allen pension file, National Archives. Allen made Madison his permanent home. See the Madison Star-Mail, 25 Jan. 1924.

[56] Quoted in Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People, 492.

"there is a chance for me to get to the front...where I propose to be before many years."[57] In Nebraska Allen set up a law practice, purchased a farm, and became active in the state Republican party.[58] In 1886 Allen was chairman of the Madison County Republican convention, and in 1890 served as a delegate to the GOP state convention in which, according to one account, he "played a prominent role."[59]

Politically, Allen displayed a reluctance to identify with any party. In 1893 for instance, Allen claimed that, up to 1878, he usually sided with the Republicans, but that he was "always [understood to be] an independent."[60] In the presidential election of 1876, Allen voted for Democrat Samuel J. Tilden.[61] Later, Allen was defensive about his place on a Democratic ticket in 1878. When he discussed the matter with a reporter in 1893, Allen seemed to downplay his prior affiliation with the Democrats, stressing his

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[57] Golden, Colorado Globe, n.d., AP.

[58] Omaha World-Herald, 8 Feb. 1893, 1; Madison Mail, 25 July 1902; Madison Star-Mail (Historical Edition), 19 Mar. 1925. After his arrival in Madison, Allen had a brief law partnership with Jim Brown. In 1885 Allen entered into partnership with John S. Robinson, who had also moved to town the year before. In 1886, Willis E. Reed, a teacher, began his legal training at Allen & Robinson, and in 1888 the firm became Allen, Robinson & Reed. So it remained until 1891, when Allen withdrew to become district judge. Robinson later served two terms in congress (1899-1903) and Reed served two terms as Nebraska's Attorney General. Both men were Democrats. See also the Official Congressional Directory, 56th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: G.P.O., 1902), 64; 57-2, 64; 58-2, 68.

[59] Sheldon, "Nebraskans I Have Known," 193-194. Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893. See also Shaw, 36; Madison Star, 21 July 1899, AP; and the Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893. Allen may have been a delegate more than once. According to the Sioux City Journal (8 Feb. 1893), Allen "was frequently a member of the state conventions." On another matter, Bicha writes that, in 1890, Allen "was instrumental in the campaign of the victorious Republican gubernatorial candidate." There are two problems here. First, Bicha's source for this information does not claim that Allen played a central role in the campaign; the word she (Mittie Scott) uses to describe his role is "active." Second, the Republican candidate was not victorious in that election; the Democrat, James Boyd, was. See Scott, 11; Olson, 226.

[60] London (Ohio) Times, 23 Mar. 1893, AP.

[61] Ibid.; Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893; Lincoln Call, n.d. but probably 8 Feb. 1893, AP.

antimonopolism.[62] As for his former Republican sympathies, in 1894 he told a magazine editor that "I was never a radical party man and am not to-day." He believed that "a party should be held no more sacred than a man's shoes or garments, and that whenever it fails to subserve the purposes of good government a man should abandon it as cheerfully as he dispenses with his worn-out clothes."[63] The only good reason to become involved with a political party was if its ascendancy to power would bring about improved government. Thus for Allen a party had no attraction beyond its utility in facilitating that end. In an era characterized by fierce political partisanship and strong party loyalties, this was an unconventional attitude.[64]

Allen's political views prior to his conversion to Populism are difficult to discern, but it is evident that Allen later took pride in his support for antimonopoly. Allen told the Omaha Bee that he was "constitutionally an anti-monopolist." He related, moreover, that he was among the reform Republicans who promoted antimonopolist sentiment within the GOP, and who worked to "loosen the grasp of the corporation on the" party.[65]

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[62] Omaha Bee, 8 Feb., 1893. Allen may have felt a strong need to distance himself from his 1870s involvement with the Democrats. On 23 Mar. 1893, Allen was quoted by a newspaper as saying that he had run for congress at the behest of "independent Republicans and anti-monopolists, the one nominating me and the other indorsing [sic]." He did not mention the Democrats. It is possible that Allen misspoke or was misquoted. See the London [Ohio] Times, 23 Mar. 1893, AP.

[63] Quoted in Shaw, 34.

[64] Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 27-28; Robert D. Marcus, Grand Old Party: Political Structure in the Gilded Age, 1880-1896 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 3-21. As George H. Mayer notes, in the Gilded Age "[p]artisan loyalty was so strong that angry voters organized third parties rather than co-operate with the opposition." See his The Republican Party, 1854-1964 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 172.

[65] Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893. Allen told the Bee that he was among those GOP members, "who with General Leese sought to introduce" the party to the antimonopoly concept. William Leese, Attorney General during part of the 1880s, was, like Rosewater and Van Wyck, a "maverick" Republican. See

But Allen became disenchanted with the Republicans. He opposed the McKinley Tariff and Force bills of 1890, and grew increasingly frustrated with the movement of the GOP "toward centralization and monopoly control."[66] Allen quit the organization "When it became evident to me that the corporations had captured the party."[67]

Sometime between August 1890 and the fall of 1891, Allen joined the People's Party. When the Populists appealed the 1890 state election results, Allen worked on the legal team representing John Powers, the narrowly defeated Independent gubernatorial candidate. The exact timing of Allen's party conversion is not clear, but Nebraska's major Republican newspapers pointed to Allen's affiliation with Powers as a central factor in precipitating his turn to Populism. It is told, wrote the Nebraska State Journal,

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Olson, 215-16. For newspaper references to Allen as part of the anti-"machine," antimonopoly faction of the party see the Lincoln Call, n.d. but probably 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Sioux City Journal, 8 Feb. 1893, AP; Alliance Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, AP.

[66] New York Times, 8 Feb. 1893, 4; Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893 (for quotation). The Force bill, a Republican effort to enfranchise southern Blacks, called for increased governmental supervision of federal elections in the South. The bill passed the House but died in the Senate. The reason for Allen's opposition is not known, but it is probable that the sectional politics of silver was a factor. Like other western silver inflationists, Allen may have seen the measure as, among other things, an attempt by the Republicans to expand support in the South for their ideology of a gold-centered and relatively contracted money supply. See Jeannette Paddock Nichols, "The Politics and Personalities of Silver Repeal in the United States Senate," American Historical Review 41 (Oct. 1935): 32. See also Donald R. Matthews, Yeas and Nays: Normal Decision-Making in the United States House of Representatives (New York: Wiley, 1975), 112-13; and Mayer, 227-30. Moreover, as Allen was, as will be shown in chapter four, quite racist, it is reasonable to assume that he was, like most northern whites, indifferent, or perhaps even hostile to the idea of Black political equality. The 1892 national platform of the People's Party (the Omaha Platform) denounced the protectionist tariff, and a resolution passed by the Omaha Convention read that "we demand a free ballot and a fair count in all elections, and pledge ourselves to secure it to every legal voter without federal intervention." John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (1931; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), Appendix F, 439-44 (quotation is on 443).

[67] Ibid.

that it was during the Powers-Boyd appeal battle that Allen "drank the drink that made him a Populist."[68]

He rose quickly in the new party. In the fall of 1891 Allen was elected, on the Populist ticket, Judge of Nebraska's ninth judicial district.[69] In 1892 he chaired the People's Party state convention at which the party moved to broaden its appeal.[70] Allen was still on the bench when, in January 1893, his party summoned him to Lincoln and made him its newest senate hopeful.

With the Republican plurality in the legislature, and the determination of the major parties to elevate one of their own to the senate, the Populists would not get their man elected easily.[71] The battle led to frenetic political maneuvering within the older

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[68] Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893. See also the Alliance Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, AP; Omaha Daily Bee, 8 Feb. 1893. For claims that Allen joined the Populists "in 1890," or during the 1890 "campaign," see Hicks, "Allen," 214; Sioux City Journal, 8 Feb. 1893, AP; World-Herald, 15 Feb. 1893, 4 (quote by C.J. Rundell); Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893; The Commoner, n.d. but during Feb. 1983 (interview with M.O. Reed, brother of Allen's 'former law partner), AP. Allen himself was inconsistent when recounting his party change. On 8 Feb. 1893 he told the Bee it had occurred "four years ago." On 23 Mar. 1893, he explained to the London [Ohio] Times that it happened "about three years ago." In his July 1894 interview with Albert Shaw (p. 34), Allen stated that he made the move during "the campaign of 1890." Addison Sheldon did not write, as Lawrence Goodwyn claims, that Allen switched to the People's Party in 1891. Sheldon may have meant what Goodwyn understands him to say, but one cannot be sure of that, given Sheldon's phraseology: "The Farmers' Alliance revolution of 1890...caught" Allen "up in its reform wave...and elected him" to the bench as a Populist in "the November election of 1891." Karel Bicha writes that Allen did not become a Populist "until late in 1891." However, the source to which he credits this information points to 1890 as the year of Allen's political conversion. Goodwyn and Bicha use the timing of Allen's conversion as evidence for what they see as his minimal devotion to the cause of reform. See Goodwyn's Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 668; Bicha, 44, 136; M.Y. Scott, 11-12.

[69] World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1; Watkins, 494; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 509.

[70] Madison Star-Mail, 12 Jan. 1924; Sheldon, "Nebraskans," 194-95; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 509; James [London, England] Gazette, 15 Oct. 1893, AP.

[71] The Nebraska Senate Journal, 23rd sess., 1893, p. 111, and the Nebraska House Journal, 23rd sess., 1893, pages vii-ix, list the total membership of the legislature as 62 Republicans, 53 Independents, 17 Democrats, and one "Ind. Democrat." See also note 27 above.

organizations and fruitless negotiations between them. The scrambling on the Democratic side was, in retrospect, rather pointless, for given their lack of unity, success would have required a near-miracle. But the extraordinary seemed possible for leading Democratic contenders such as Governor Boyd and Congressman William Jennings Bryan, both of whom had a respectable following among Populists, and for J. Sterling Morton, who hoped that the Republicans might be induced to support a conservative in order to prevent the election of a Populist radical. But after four weeks of balloting, the Republicans and the Populists remained firmly committed to their own candidates, thereby shutting out the Democrats, who, characteristically, remained hopelessly divided for the duration of the proceedings. Any possibility of a Republican-Populist coalition was obviated three weeks into the balloting, when the Republicans, who had been unable to unite behind incumbent Senator Algernon S. Paddock, abandoned him in favor of John M. Thurston, lead attorney for the Union Pacific Railroad.[72]

Circumstances made for Populist-Democrat cooperation. In addition to their common antipathy toward the GOP, the two organizations were compatible on the important currency issue. Bryan, a rising star among silver spokesmen, controlled eleven Democratic legislators, all of whom were probably pro-silver. A friend of Allen's, Bryan endorsed his candidacy and appealed to Democratic legislators to support him.[73] On

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[72] Watkins, 248; Sheldon, "Nebraskans," 195-96; Coletta, "Bryan and the Senatorial Election of 1893," 189-99.

[73] Coletta, 188-91, 198, 200-01.

February 4, three days prior to the final vote, the Omaha World-Herald, the state's leading Democratic newspaper, came out for Allen, describing him as "able, honest and distinguished." More to the point, his election would prevent the Republicans from taking the seat.[74] Two days later, the Democratic National Committee, hoping to ensure a Democratic plurality in the United States Senate, also called for Allen's election. On February 7, after a month of wrangling and seventeen ballots, five intransigent Cleveland Democrats finally capitulated.[75] Their votes made Allen the first non-Republican to be elected United States Senator from Nebraska.[76]

As the Omaha Bee's Edward Rosewater observed, Allen's election inspired "a general expression of satisfaction." Adherents of the major parties, of course, wanted one of their own, and, the editor admitted, the businessmen among them in particular were likely to lament the Populist victory because of the new party's "radical and

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[74] World-Herald (Eve.), 4 Feb. 1893, 4. Years later, Richard L. Metcalfe related that, as a young reporter for the World-Herald, he had convinced editor Gilbert Hitchcock to give Allen the paper's endorsement. At the time Metcalfe, sensing that Allen would ultimately prevail in the election, told his boss that their paper "might just as well get the credit." Given that Metcalfe was a Bryanite, as well as a future editor of the World-Herald and Bryan's Commoner, his utilitarian view of the election dynamics is understandable. That said, it should be noted that Metcalfe always greatly admired Allen and later assisted his campaign for a district judgeship in 1911. See comments by Sheldon and Metcalfe in Sheldon's "Nebraskans," 204-06. See also Metcalfe's "A Glowing Tribute to Senator Allen," unidentified newspaper article, 4 Oct. 1911, AP. That many prominent Democrats were in favor of Allen's election is indicated in the World-Herald for 5 Feb. 1893, 1. See especially the comments of Governor Boyd, J.S. Robinson (Allen's former law partner), state Representative G.A. Luikart of Madison county, and former state committeeman T.F. Memminger.

[75] Coletta, "Bryan and the Senate Election of 1893," 198-99; Watkins, 248; Randolph Times, 10 Feb. 1893, AP. See also the Nebraska House Journal, 23rd sess., 1893, p. 362; Nebraska Senate Journal, 23rd sess., 1893, pp. 245, 254, 266, 290-92.

[76] Olson, 143, 209; New York Times, 8 Feb. 1893, 4. After the seventeenth ballot, Allen, with 65 votes, was one vote shy of a majority (the legislature had 133 members, 2 of whom – one Democrat and one Republican – did not vote). The final total was Allen 70, Paddock 59 (the GOP had returned to him as a courtesy), and others 2. See the Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893; Sioux City Journal, 8 Feb., AP; Alliance Herald, 10 Feb., AP; Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People, 728.

eccentric views...on the currency and other economic issues." But according to Rosewater, such "apprehension" was unwarranted. Nebraska's newest senator was no "hare-brained visionary or wild-eyed revolutionist." Rather, Allen was not only judicious and patriotic, but also "well balanced, broad-minded and conservative." Perhaps even more impressive in Rosewater's view was the fact that Allen had won "without incurring any obligation to corporations or special interests." Thus, the GOP should in no way consider his election "an irretrievable disaster."[77]

Although some Republicans expressed their antipathy toward both rival parties, as well as concerns over the cooperation between the two, most agreed that Allen was a good senatorial choice. The editor of the O'Neill Frontier thought that Allen, despite his misguided party allegiance, was in all respects a "a good man," the best possible choice among the Populists. If the new senator had to be a Populist, the paper was "most awfully glad it is Judge Allen."[78] The Crete Vidette felt the same way and opined that Allen was "so much better than the general run of [Populist] leaders that the Vidette marvels how they came to select him."[79] The paper emphasized Allen's erstwhile Republicanism, as did the Lincoln News, which before the election had staunchly opposed Allen, but now editorialized that a former Republican "cannot be altogether wrong." Although Allen was a Populist, he was "not a cracked brain calamity howler," but "a man of more than ordinary intelligence" who would make an "honest" effort in his

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[77] Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893.

[78] O'Neill Frontier, quoted in the Omaha World-Herald, 13 Feb. 1893, 4.

[79] Crete Vidette, quoted in the Bee, 11 Feb. 1893.

new position.[80] The Ashland Gazette praised Allen in terms that were already quite familiar when it judged him "a fair minded man" who "is not a partisan politician."[81] Church Howe, a prominent representative who had once sponsored an anti-Alliance resolution in the state senate, called Allen the "best" choice among the Independents, and prophesied that he would assume "a prominent position" on Capitol Hill.[82]

On the Democratic side, some complaints were heard from anti-Populists, unreconciled partisans, and the Cleveland wing, but most comments about Allen were akin to those of the Wayne Democrat. Its editor had no use for "radical populists," but saw in Allen a "conservative" who was "incorruptible and honest," the "peer of any man" previously elected to the senate from Nebraska.[83] Most of the praise heaped on Allen by the Democratic press was effusive and unqualified. The Plattsmouth Journal thought

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[80] Lincoln News, quoted in the Omaha Bee, 10 Feb. 1893. The News had, prior to the election, condemned Democratic-Populist fusion and added charges of an evil "conspiracy" concocted by Allen and Boyd. See the Lincoln News for 6 Feb. 1893, AP.

[81] Ashland Gazette. See additional positive commentary by the Madison Chronicle and Niobrara Pioneer, all quoted in the Omaha Bee, 11 Feb. 1893.

[82] Quoted in Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893. On Howe, see Olson, 218. For Republican commentary which denounced Populism but did not express disapproval of Allen, see the Milwaukee Sentinel, quoted in the World-Herald, 13 Feb. 1893, 4; the Minneapolis Journal, from which distinct quotations appear in the World-Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, 4; and Nebraska State Journal, 13 Feb. 1893. For papers that disapproved of Allen because he was a Populist, see the Sioux City Journal and the Chicago Journal, both quoted in the Nebraska State Journal, 10 Feb. 1893. For opposition to Allen because of the coalitional basis of his support, see the half-dozen Republican newspapers which condemned fusion and are quoted in the World-Herald, 10 Feb., 4; and the Omaha Bee, Feb. 10 and 11.

[83] Wayne Democrat, quoted in the World-Herald, 13 Feb. 1893, 4. For another expression of this sentiment see George L. Miller to Arthur Pue Gorman, 14 Feb. 1893, AP. For an instance in which Allen was disapproved of because he was not Democratic enough, see the Nebraska City Press, quoted in the Omaha Bee, 12 Feb. 1893. For a mixed but mostly favorable opinion see the Nebraska City News, quoted on 10 Feb. in both the Bee and the World-Herald, 4. At least one Democratic paper staunchly opposed Allen. The Plattsmouth News dismissed him as a political opportunist who made a habit of switching political parties whenever it would advance his political career. Quoted in the World-Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, 4.

Allen "as sound a man as" could be found in Nebraska,[84] a figure widely known for "ability and rectitude of character, who enjoys the confidence and respect of men [of] all parties to an unusual extent." Not to be outflanked by the Republicans, some of whom had pointed to Allen's earlier affiliation with the GOP, the Journal noted Allen's "democratic antecedents." Allen's victory was "most gratifying," and promised to provide the common people with "renewed hope and courage in their battle against monopoly and the money god."[85]

On the night of the election, the Omaha World-Herald, whose earlier support of Allen probably aided his victory, called him "a splendid specimen of physical and intellectual manhood," and reported that "All who meet him are strongly impressed with his many excellent traits of character and his modest and manly demeanor."[86] Three days later the paper denounced the Republican party as corrupt and lawless and charged that it was controlled by "a gigantic ring" in the interests of the corporations. The World-Herald maintained that it was "doubtful if any other state in the union has suffered as Nebraska has from corporate rule and 'peanut' politics." But in recent years the people had begun to make some political headway against the GOP, and Allen's election marked the "crowning victory of the great reform crusade." "It means," the paper continued,

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[84] Plattsmouth Journal, quoted in the Omaha Bee, 10 Feb. 1893.

[85] Plattmsouth Journal, 7 Feb. 1893, AP (also quoted in the World-Herald for 10 Feb., 4). For statements that Allen's political background was primarily Democratic, see the comments of G.B. Pray to the Des Moines Leader, quoted in the World-Herald for 10 Feb. 1893, 4; the reaction of the Leader itself, quoted in the Nebraska State Journal for 10 Feb.; and the criticism of Allen by the Plattsmouth News, quoted in the World-Herald for 10 Feb., 4.

[86] Omaha World-Herald, 8 Feb. 1893, 1.

"that the toilers have one more and the corporations one less representative in the...American house of lords."[87]

Populists were ecstatic. They believed that in Allen they had, as John Hicks put it, a "symbol of that unimpeachable respectability they craved for themselves and their party but could scarcely hope to attain."[88] In the opinion of one independent state representative, Allen "towers above his fellowmen both intellectually and physically, as the giant oak above the surrounding forest."[89] Editor Thomas H. Tibbles, who would be the Populist vice-presidential candidate in 1904, wrote that Allen "will walk into the millionaire club" at the nation's capital "from the midst of the common people without a stain on his name, and [will be] the peer in intellect of the very best of them."[90] S.C. Fairchild, state lecturer for the National Farmer's Alliance and Industrial Union, characterized the senator-elect as "an honest man, the noblest work of God."[91]

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[87] Omaha World-Herald, 11 Feb. 1893, 4. Four other Democratic papers sharing the World-Herald's high opinion of Allen are quoted in the Omaha Bee for 10 Feb. See also the comments of John T. Lindsay (a Bryan supporter) in the World-Herald (Eve.), 10 Feb. 1893, 4. Much positive commentary is also found in the statements of over thirty Democrats and Republicans in the World-Herald for 5 Feb., 9. See the articles titled "They Favor Judge Allen," and "What Omaha People Say."

[88] Hicks, The Populist Revolt, 283.

[89] Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893. In his profile of Allen published the following year, editor Albert Shaw wrote that Allen "measures about six feet and three inches, and weighs two hundred and thirty pounds, not an ounce of which appears superfluous. He has a broad and massive frame that supports a large Websterian head, and he stands as straight as a pine tree....His spectacles add something of a benign, professorial aspect to a countenance that otherwise might seem severe in repose." Shaw, 32.

[90] Omaha World-Herald, 11 Feb. 1893, 4; Sheldon, "Nebraskans," 202.

[91] Omaha World-Herald, 6 Feb. 1893, 4. See also the comments of the "Hon." S.M. Elder in the World-Herald for 5 Feb., 1. This Clay County resident is identified as a Democrat, but his remarks suggest that he was an Independent.

The independent press was just as effusive in its praise of Allen's mental and moral stature. One paper described him as "brainy, honest and honorable."[92] Another insisted that "as a man of honor and integrity he stands in the front ranks."[93] In O'Neill, Nebraska, where Allen was well known among local lawyers, the Sun called him "an exemplary fine man" and reported that townspeople spoke of Allen's legal and juridical skills "in the most flattering terms."[94] In the estimation of the Oakland Independent it would have been difficult to top Allen as a choice for senator. He was "quiet and unassuming, but dignified and firm." According to the paper, Allen was a superior "presiding officer and parliamentarian," a judge who was held in high esteem by court participants on all sides, "while the 'common people,' for whom he ever has a good word and a pleasant smile, almost worship him."[95] And the Alliance-Independent, the state party organ, noted Allen's "large and well stored brain," and agreed with those observers who touted him as the best alternative from within the Independent fold.[96]

Most Populists undoubtedly agreed with Tibbles, who saw Allen's election as a glorious triumph in the war against political corruption, and with the independent legislator who asserted that it marked "the greatest victory of the people over the

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[92] Holdredge Progress, quoted in the Omaha Bee for 11 Feb. 1893.

[93] Auburn Granger, quoted in the Bee, 11 Feb. 1893.

[94] O'Neill Sun, n.d. but during Feb. 1893, AP.

[95] Oakland Independent, quoted in the Omaha Bee, 10 Feb. 1893.

[96] Alliance-Independent, 9 Feb. 1893. See also the Beatrice Tribune, excerpted in the World-Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, 4; Madison County Herald, n.d. but during Feb. 1893, AP.

corporations" in Nebraska's history.[97] Quoting Wendall Phillips, who, two decades earlier, remarked that "the brush of Jay Gould's coat tail would knock over the whole Nebraska legislature," Tibbles maintained that the unceasing depravity of the latter had caused Nebraskans to carry a burden of "shame" ever since. But the Populists' senate victory obviated the need for such feeling. "Now we can stand up and face the world while we say that all the wealth of all the corporations cannot bribe the Nebraska legislature." A different sort of political creature untainted by pestilent corporate influence, Allen would be able to devote all of his energies to lawmaking. After all, Tibbles speculated, he would have no control over federal appointments, and "no banks, no railroads, no syndicates, no trusts to manage."[98]

At a time when many people were convinced that the United States government was evolving into a puppet of big business, and as one writer has put it "that Congress was filled with corporate agents--'railway Senators' and Trust representatives," the widespread perception that Allen secured his new office by honest means was of no small import.[99] On the day Allen was elected, the World-Herald commented that as a man of rather small means whose material possessions were worth "no more than $5,000," it was "simply astounding" that he had emerged victorious against the combined forces of

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[97] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 11 Feb. 1893, 4; Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893 (For quotation).

[98] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 11 Feb. 1893, 4.

[99] Peck, 268.

powerful corporate and seasoned political opposition.[100] Allen was, according to the Bee, a rarity, having become a senator "without scrambling for the office, without expending a dollar, and without incurring any obligation to corporations or special interests."[101] The Independent Madison County Herald, suggested that Allen's election was "a case of [the] 'office seeking the man.'"[102]

In addition to the pride they felt in their new senator's political and personal virtue and the long-overdue victory over electoral corruption, Independents heralded Allen's election for yet another reason: it marked, in their estimation, the start of a brighter future for the oppressed common man. As one Independent legislator confidently explained, "better" times lie ahead.[103] Tibbles predicted that Allen would become an important force "in the organization of that great industrial army that will make the homes of these vast plains more prosperous than the pen of Bellamy can depict."[104] C.J. Rundell of Wayne advised fellow Populists that, with the election victory over "corporation henchmen" in hand, they should now seek "greater achievements." Rundell called for the conversion of more men like Allen to the Populist

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[100] Omaha World-Herald, 8 Feb. 1893, 1.

[101] Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893. A contemporary reported that Allen spent "$74.25" on the election, and speculated that it most likely was the "smallest sum by which a" current place in the senate was procured. This may refer to an election registration fee. See Frank Basil Tracy, "Rise and Doom of the Populist Party," Forum 16 (Oct. 1893): 247.

[102] Madison County Herald, n.d. but during Feb. 1893, AP. See also the Norfolk News (Republican), quoted in the Omaha Bee, 10 Feb. 1893; the selected comments of state legislators in the Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893; and Omaha World-Herald, 5 Feb. 1893, 9.

[103] Nebraska State Journal, 8 Feb. 1893.

[104] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 11 Feb. 1893, 4.

cause, so that "control of the republic" could be reclaimed from big business. "Then," wrote Rundell, "like the abolitionists who lived to behold a former slave of Jefferson Davis occupying the arch-traitor's seat in the United States senate, we can all say amen."[105]

Allen saw his election as proof that Nebraskans wished "to inaugurate a new order of things." His basic mission, as he interpreted it, was to work for "certain reforms" demanded by the citizenry. Although in the immediate aftermath of the election, Allen did not explain what changes he had in mind, he promised to toil scrupulously for the realization of needed reforms.[106]

Some of Allen's other comments, however, doubtless suggested to contemporaries that his commitment to reform was weaker than the standard Populist line. In a brief acceptance speech to the legislature, Allen pledged to act "with caution and care, and the conservatism" appropriate to his new position.[107] Later the same day he told a public audience that, because his actions would be connected in some measure to "the peace and welfare of" Nebraska, he would do "nothing radical." To each issue with

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[105] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 15 Feb. 1893, 4. See also Rundell's comments in the same paper for 5 Feb. The latter issue identifies Rundell as a Democrat, but his quoted statements in the former suggest that he was a Populist. In addition, see the comments of William L. Greene—who was, as was noted earlier in the text, the second of three choices by the Populists during the election contest, and who later served two terms in congress (1897-1901)—quoted in the World-Herald, 8 Feb., 1; and, the opinion of the Madison Reporter, quoted in the Omaha Bee for 11 Feb.

[106] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1.

[107] Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893.

which he would grapple, Allen intended to devote the "conservative thought that its magnitude requires."[108]

While Allen's specific policy views prior to the beginning of his term are impossible to discern, two things are clear. First, Allen saw no contradiction in claiming that he was both a dedicated Populist and a political moderate. If he meant to legislate conservatively, he also reaffirmed, at least rhetorically, his commitment to Populism. On the very day of his election, Allen professed to be in complete accord with the Populist program, and, more specifically, with the party's demands for free silver and an income tax.[109] Ten weeks later, Allen remarked that his policy positions were most effectively articulated "in the words of the Omaha platform."[110]

Second, Allen was, interestingly enough, somewhat pro-Cleveland. He felt "strong admiration" for the Democratic president, with whom he agreed in principle on the need for tariff reduction. In Allen's view, tariff reform should not be radical, for if it were, he thought the American people would probably reject it. Allen even announced that, in everything pertaining to the structuring of the Senate, as well as in ratifying presidential appointments, he would act with the Democratic Party.[111]

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[108] Omaha World-Herald (Eve.), 8 Feb. 1893, 1.

[109] Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893.

[110] London [Ohio] Times, 23 Mar. 1893, AP.

[111] Ibid.; Omaha Bee, 8 Feb. 1893. While Allen favored incremental lowering of tariff duties, he nevertheless wanted to see greater reductions than did Cleveland. How Allen initially handled the organization matter is not known, but in the 54th congress (1895-97) he joined his Populist senate colleagues in abstaining on the related votes. See Peter Argersinger, The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism and American Politics (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 216-217.

Many newspaper editors thought that, as senator, Allen would ally himself with the Democrats on policy. Their reasoning was shaped by more than the fact that Allen liked Grover Cleveland. To begin with, there was Allen's announced intent to approach his new duties conservatively. In addition, Democratic votes had helped Allen to victory. Many in the press therefore assumed that, in return for Democratic support, Allen had pledged to cooperate with the Democrats, at least on major issues.[112] Moreover, Allen's support for free silver and his friendship with Bryan suggested to many that Senator Allen would act with the silver Democrats.[113]

Allen would hold fast to his pro-silver convictions, but for those who hoped the new senator would be an ally of the Democratics, Allen would prove to be a huge disappointment.

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[112] Council Bluffs Globe, in Omaha World-Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, 4; Sioux City Journal, in World-Herald, 13 Feb., 4; Kearney Hub, in Nebraska State Journal, 10 Feb.

[113] Chicago Mail and Chicago Inter Ocean, both excerpted in the Omaha World-Herald, 10 Feb. 1893, 4; Norfolk Journal, in Omaha Bee, 11 Feb.; Boston Daily Globe, in World-Herald, 13 Feb., 4. Other observers did not believe that Allen had pledged himself to the Democrats. See the New York World, in the Omaha World-Herald, 13 Feb. 1893, 4; Lincoln Call, n.d. but during Feb. 1893, AP; Beatrice Democrat, in Omaha Bee, 11 Feb. According to Cherny, upon his nomination by the Populists Allen conferred with leaders of the Bryan wing of the Democratic Party, and assented to "work closely" with Bryan. Once elected, Allen expressed to Bryan his awareness that he owed his election to Bryan's assistance "and that he would repay the debt in the future." Robert W. Cherny, A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 43.

CHAPTER TWO

The Special Session of the Fifty-third Congress:

Repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, 1893

> Coming from the ranks of a new party ... the pious of the [old parties] drew upon their Bible treasures for, "What will this babbler say?" But it was immediately evident that he came not to "sit at the feet of Gamaliel," but to "tread upon his toes."
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> Thomas W. Tipton, former United States Senator from Nebraska (1867-1875), commenting on William V. Allen's early weeks in Congress.[1]

William Allen's swearing-in took place in the Senate on March 4, 1893. As was customary, the assumption of a new presidential administration on the same day brought forth the concurrent start of a brief, introductory Senate session (five weeks in this case), the main business of which was the consideration of cabinet nominees.[2] During the

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[1] Thomas Weston Tipton, Forty Years of Nebraska: At Home and in Congress (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1902), 362. For useful observations on congressional Populists' antipathy for elitist snobbery, see Peter H. Argersinger, "No Rights on this Floor: Third Parties and the Institutionalization of Congress," in Argersinger, The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism and American Politics (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 213-45. See specifically 231-32.

[2] Congressional Record (hereafter CR), 53rd Cong., special sess., 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 1; Congressional Quarterly's Guide to Congress, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1991), 135A. The session ran from 4 March until 15 April. Allen chose Democrat Thomas F. Memminger to be his private secretary in Washington. Memminger lived in Allen's hometown of Madison, to which he had migrated in 1884 along with his friend John S. Robinson (Allen's law partner, 1885-1891). Memminger, who had served two terms as Madison county treasurer and had been for two years a member of the Democratic State Committee, was described as one of Nebraska's most loyal and dedicated Democrats. He had staunchly supported Allen during the election battle in the legislature; at least, he did so during the period after it became obvious that a Democrat would not be chosen. He later served as Madison's mayor from 1902-1903. Madison County Herald, n.d., Allen papers (hereafter AP), Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter NSHS). See also Omaha World-Herald, 5 Feb. 1893, and 12 Feb. 1893; Madison Mail, 25 July 1902; Madison Star-Mail: Historical Edition, 19 March 1925. Addison Erwin Sheldon notes that two Alliance-Independent staff members, S. Edwin Thornton and C.H. Pirtle, gained "salaried positions at Washington" because of Allen's election. It is unclear whether these men worked for

abbreviated session Allen received his committee assignments. Given that the Senate's Populist contingent comprised only three members (William A. Peffer of Kansas and James H. Kyle of South Dakota entered the upper chamber in 1891) and because they declined cooperation with the other parties in organizing the Senate, Allen, like his Populist colleagues, was selected for what were generally viewed as relatively minor committees: Claims, Indian Affairs, Public Lands, the Select Committee on the Transportation and Sale of Meat Products, and, as chair, the Select Committee on Forest Reservations.[3]

Meanwhile economic depression, which continued unabated in the agricultural parts of the West and the South (which in Nebraska was exacerbated by a continuation of the drought begun in 1890), began to infect the nation's manufacturing and finance sectors. Several factors led to the trouble: inadequacies in the private banking structure, superfluous expansion of the railroad network, a shrinking of the domestic market for industrial goods, widespread and reckless speculation in real estate and other ventures, the effects of European financial panics, a reduction of exports and the agricultural depression itself. The panic-induced failure in late February of the giant Philadelphia

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Allen himself. See Sheldon's Nebraska: The Land and the People, vol. 1 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), 743.

[3] CR, 53rd Cong., special sess., 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 16-17. On the subject of Populists' access to choice committee assignments, see Argersinger, "No Rights," 217-19. As Peffer put it in his history of Populism, Populist senators were denied membership on major committees as well as those whose tasks were within the sphere of "party politics." William A. Peffer, Populism, Its Rise and Fall, ed. Peter H. Argersinger (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 91. On the large workload required by, and the low prestige associated with, the Claims Committee, see David J. Rothman, Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869-1901 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 53-54.

and Reading Railroad was followed in the spring by other business failures, an escalation of the panic in the stock market and a crisis in the banking industry. In the ensuing months several other major railroads fell into receivership, and the country slipped into a full-fledged economic depression. By the end of the year, six hundred banks and about fifteen thousand businesses went bankrupt, and perhaps as many as three million workers were unemployed. Hard times would not pass quickly; what most contemporaries defined as prosperity did not return until 1898.[4]

Since the first five years of Allen's Senate career would transpire within the context of severe economic calamity, the significance of the depression warrants brief discussion. Historian R. Hal Williams, author of a survey of the decade's national political scene, calls the depression the "decisive event" of the 1890s.[5] Its destructive effects on the American people were "enormous, even among the prominent." Many Americans began to question previously held beliefs, especially on economic matters. Among some of the disaffected, there was even "talk of revolution and war and bloodshed."[6]

The devastation and conflicts of the middle 1890s, along with the effect of the depression in drawing attention to the interconnectedness of processes within the economy, "shifted the country's focus from the local to the national."[7] As Gene Clanton

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[4] Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion, 1890-1900 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 52-54, 141-46, 161; R. Hal Williams, Years of Decision: American Politics in the 1890s (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 74-77.

[5] Williams, 77.

[6] Ibid., 77-78.

[7] Ibid., 78.

has pointed out, the Populist reform program was, for the most part, a "national one" that could not be effectuated at lower levels of government. Therefore it was imperative for the Populists to establish a "national power base."[8] Capitol Hill, "Populism's one and only true national stage," became, perhaps inevitably, the location of that base, and it was there, according to Clanton, that "the clearest indication" of Populism's goals were repeatedly expressed.[9] These facts, when considered in conjunction with the late nineteenth-century prominence of the Senate, indicated that, however formidable the institutional barriers to the enactment of their legislative agenda, the contentious little band of Populist senators could reasonably expect that their demands would receive national attention.[10]

While there was considerable disagreement as to both the causes of and proper solutions for the deteriorating economic situation, President Cleveland focused on the status of the federal gold reserve. During the first two months of 1893, nervous investors rapidly dumped stocks and other investments in exchange for gold from the United States Treasury, resulting in what the investing class saw as an alarmingly rapid depletion of the reserve. It was generally held that the minimum required reserve was $100,000,000. But

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[8] Gene Clanton, Populism : The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900 (Boston: Twayne publishers, 1991), 118. Includes both quotations. John D. Hicks raises the same point, noting that an independent political entity had become necessary in order to enact "national measures of reform that the states were powerless to effect." John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931), 185.

[9] Clanton, 125.

[10] During the last three decades of the century, according to historian Oscar Handlin, the Senate developed into the "pivotal political institution of the republic." Handlin, forward to Rothman, vii. "Contemporaries," Rothman writes, perceived the Senate to be the superior force within the federal government, and it played the predominant role in the crafting of important bills. Rothman, 3. See also 248.

much gold was now being purchased, as Williams explains, with silver money, greenbacks, and the Treasury certificates (or notes) issued to purchase silver under an important but highly controversial law.[11]

That law was the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890. It mandated that the Treasury buy 4,500,000 ounces of silver each month and to pay for it with newly printed legal tender Treasury notes. The act was, as Williams notes, a compromise between the free silver forces, who demanded unlimited free silver coinage, and gold monometallists, who would have preferred to demonetize silver altogether.[12] In the early months of 1893 Cleveland agreed with many observers who saw the Sherman Act as the primary cause of the financial panic, and he began a concerted effort to bring about its repeal.[13] In a message to congress on June 30, Cleveland blamed the crisis on "unwise laws" and directed the congress to meet in special session to consider remedial legislation.[14] The President launched that session on August 7 with a lengthy message on the pernicious results of the Sherman Act and the dire necessity for its repeal.[15] In one respect the fight that ensued was just one part of a long string of controversies over the currency during the post-Civil War period. As David Rothman has written, during the Gilded Age "the

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[11] Williams, 75.

[12] Ibid., 35-36. Quotation is on p. 35. The official title of the Sherman law was the Treasury Note Act of 1890. See Richard H. Timberlake, "Repeal of Silver Monetization in the Late Nineteenth Century," Journal of Money, Credit, and Banking 10 (1978): 29.

[13] Ibid., 75, 79; Faulkner, 147; Harry Thurston Peck, Twenty Years of the Republic: 1885-1905 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1917), 335-36.

[14] D. Appleton and Company, Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1893 (New York, 1894), 222.

[15] Ibid., 224-26.

need to stabilize" the country's monetary system may very well have been the most significant and complicated problem with which the Senate grappled.[16] But that does not lessen the significance of what Williams calls "the great repeal battle of 1893," an episode "that would reshape the politics of the decade."[17]

When the Senate convened in August, its deliberations were not confined strictly to the Sherman Act, though, in varying degrees, most of the items had some relevance to it. One of these was a much-debated bill that called for adjustments in the terms under which the federal government redeemed its bond issues through the national banks. Democratic Senator Daniel Voorhees of Indiana, who reported on the bill from the Finance Committee and was a principle advocate for repeal, described the bill as a modest attempt to aid the American people by increasing the volume of currency in circulation.[18]

The People's Party platform of 1892, better known as the Omaha platform, was very explicit as to the party's position on both the circulating medium and the national banks. It called for an expansion of the money supply to at least "$50 per capita," and insisted on a "national currency...issued" solely by the federal government "without the use of banking corporations."[19] According to the document's preamble, these

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[16] Rothman, 76-77.

[17] Williams, 83. "This important session," Clanton writes, "merits closer study than it has received. Concerning the views of the Populists, it yet remains a missing chapter in the nation's history." See Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference, 135. Also, see Clanton, "Hayseed Socialism on the Hill: Congressional Populism, 1891-1895," Western Historical Quarterly 15, no. 2 (Apr. 1984), 158-59.

[18] CR, 53rd Cong., 1st sess. (hereafter 53-1), 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 330; Appleton's Cyclopaedia, 222.

[19] National Party Platforms: Volume 1 1840-1956, compiled by Donald Bruce Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 91.

corporations had assumed an inappropriate role as a source of the money supply and used that authority to advance the interests of those who possessed interest-bearing bonds. Furthermore, it charged that government bond issues, redeemable in gold, were financed through the creation of "a vast public debt" which compounded the financial "burdens of the people."[20] As expressed in one of the platform's financial planks, Populists believed that money "should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people," and consequently they demanded "that all state and national revenues shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered."[21]

Less than two weeks into the session, Allen, speaking on the Senate floor for the first time, offered an amendment to the Voorhees bill. The first part of the proposal was an attempt to ensure that government bonds would earn interest only when treasury notes used to pay for them were in the possession of the government. The second part stipulated that the bill was not to be understood to obligate "the Government to the policy of a permanent national debt," or to hinder it from meeting its contractual loan-repayment schedules.[22]

In the debate that followed, Allen forcefully spoke out against the privileges and power of the national banks. The banks had for some time exercised control over the

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[20] Ibid., 90. For a discussion of how the national banking system "posed the heart of the American Farmers' dilemma throughout the Gilded Age," see Paolo E. Coletta, "Greenbackers, Goldbugs, and Silverites: Currency Reform and Policy, 1860-1897," in The Gilded Age: A Reappraisal (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1963), 111-139. Quotation is on 112-13.

[21] Ibid., 91.

[22] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 446-47. The designation "Voorhees" bill will be used here, although it might actually have been sponsored originally by some other senator. Allen and other senators seemed to think it Voorhees's creation. See 330, 447. In the CR, debate on the legislation appears under the heading "Increase of National-Bank Circulation."

money supply, Allen argued, and that ought not be allowed to continue. It was "dangerous" to allow the banks this authority which, according to the Constitution, was supposed to be the province of the federal government. If corporations were to be granted "special privileges" such as this, he satirically suggested that any ordinary citizen might as well be allowed "to deposit bonds ... and to procure an issuance of notes." The solution, Allen believed, was to employ "radical steps" to dissolve the present banking system "as rapidly as safety to our commerce will permit."[23]

Allen opposed the Voorhees bill because he thought it would do nothing to diminish the power of the national banks and other corporations to direct the future course of the nation. He was convinced those institutions would use that power to the detriment of the general population.[24] He could see no particular benefit in the bill accruing to the "laboring people."[25] Allen contended, moreover, that if the object of the bill was to increase the money supply, the government could accomplish that by fiat through the simple issuing of greenbacks.[26]

In his final comments on the bank bill, Allen charged that Senate advocates of national bank interests were utilizing undemocratic means to achieve their goals. In particular, he pointed to their response to Senator Peffer's call for an investigation of illegal activities in the banking industry. Allen perceived that opponents of the measure

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[23] Ibid., 447. On these points see also CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, p. 2185.

[24] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 447, 1002.

[25] Ibid., 450.

[26] Ibid., 989, 1002. When Senator Francis M. Cockrell, a Missouri Democrat, offered an amendment to increase circulation further than the Voorhees bill would, all three Populists voted yea. The amendment was voted down. See ibid., 330, 990.

sought to keep the existence of suspicions about the banks from becoming public. These senators advocated "the strange doctrine" that the American people should not be allowed full information about the activities of their representatives.[27]

Allen thought such an attitude especially egregious in the face of widespread misery among the American people. The multitude who are distressed because of "evil legislation may appeal" for relief, he charged, but their plight fails to "arouse a sympathetic chord" in Senate discussions bearing on the welfare of the banks and the corporations that "bleed the life out of" the people. Even worse, the Senate endeavors to quiet its internal critics "for fear that" candor would send "some of them into chaos."[28]

In mid September, Senator William M. Stewart, a Nevada Republican, introduced a resolution calling for the creation of a Senate committee to look into whether any members of the Senate held stock or had other pecuniary interest in the national bank system. In a speech in support of the measure, Allen continued his criticism of the national banks. He charged that in New York the banks were illegally withholding money from depositors, a crime made worse by the Senate's earlier refusal to approve Peffer's request for an investigation, which, Allen noted, would at least have compelled the Senate to issue a report on the matter. In addition, based in part on information given him by the Secretary of the Treasury, Allen accused the banks of breaking the law by

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[27] Ibid., 1002-1003. The quotation is on 1002.

[28] Ibid., 1003. More of Allen's comments on the bank bill are on 451-52. Allen's August 18th amendment was voted down overwhelmingly; all three Populists voted yea, but only eight other senators supported it. See ibid., 457. On 31 August, the Senate voted thirty-five to twenty-one in favor of sending Peffer's investigation resolution to the Finance Committee, a move tantamount to killing it. Allen, Kyle, and Peffer were in the minority. See ibid., 1103. For the commentary of another senator that helps to place

dispersing clearing-house certificates. He supposed, moreover, that the government knew of these statutory violations. Citing the Constitution of the New York Clearing-house Association (1892), Allen noted that one of its members was the Assistant Treasurer of the United States. The government, Allen thought, was surely "*particeps criminis*."[29]

In a foreshadowing of his stance in the upcoming Sherman Act repeal battle, Allen charged the New York banking interests with undermining the status of silver as a legitimate component of the nation's circulating medium. He argued that these bankers were interested only in acquiring gold (or gold coin or treasury notes, which were assumed to be redeemable in gold). Other, lesser forms of money were for the "common herd." "The man who stands at the plow ... the man who stands at the forge or in the factory performing valuable labor and creating wealth, may have the inferior kind of money." The banks, on the other hand, could "discriminate against" a legally recognized part of the money supply. It is "a sad spectacle," he stated, "that a great nation should" legislate to enable vested interests to benefit from favoring a select part of the money supply over another, which "is not good enough for these gentlemen at New York."[30]

If Stewart's proposal suggested the possibility of senatorial corruption, Allen's views on venality in government echoed the certainty of the Omaha Platform. The

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Allen's final speech in a fuller context, see the remarks of Senator John M. Palmer (Democrat, Illinois), ibid., 1001.

[29] William V. Allen, National Bank Interests (Washington, 1893), 3, 6-7 (quotation on 7), reprint of CR, 53-1, pt. 2, p. 1435-38.

[30] Ibid., 7-8. Final quotation is on 7, the remainder on 8.

platform's preamble declared that "corruption dominates" both "the ballot box," and every branch of state and federal government, including the Senate.[31] Allen asserted that perhaps "millions" of Americans were convinced that a good deal of the laws emanating from congress were formulated in accordance with the "personal interest" of the men serving therein.[32]

Allen rejected the claim of Senator David B. Hill (Democrat, New York) that senators could be counted on to vote in a disinterested manner in cases where their own financial interests were likely to be effected. While he agreed that the law did not proscribe senators their investments in corporations and banks, Allen asserted that no law "among English speaking people" had ever expressly allowed it, and that no English parliament had ever permitted a member to vote on legislation affecting his personal financial interest.[33] Although he would like to believe it conceivable for the ordinary "man to rise above his prejudices" and private interests, Allen saw it as axiomatic that most men would not have the ethical fortitude to vote in the interest of the general welfare in cases where it seemed likely that their own financial interests would be damaged. For that reason, information about potential conflicts of interest should be made available to the public.[34]

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[31] National Party Platforms, 89. Pro-repeal observers of the Senate were often themselves displeased with the state of the institution. For two examples of criticisms by conservatives, see H. von Holst, "Shall the Senate Rule the Republic?" and, unsigned, "The Senate in the Light of History," both in Forum 16 (Nov. 1893): 263-81.

[32] Allen, 3.

[33] Ibid., 8-9. Quotation is on 8.

[34] Ibid, 9.

Responding to Hill's sarcastic suggestion that, in light of such concerns the Senate might as well extend its probe into how senators' personal pecuniary interests effected their actions on tariff legislation, Allen declared that "it would be preeminently the thing to do." Legislating for their own parochial interests, Eastern capitalists and those who did their bidding in the Senate had for three decades clutched the general public "by the throat" on the tariff issue, forcing them "to pay tribute" to "New England and the Eastern states."[35] Allen was certain, furthermore, "that nine-tenths of the men who have fattened upon the industries of this nation through" the banking system and through tariff duties "religiously and conscientiously believe" themselves entitled to the privilege. Having "fattened at the public crib so long," he explained, these beneficiaries of government largesse could "stand up and honestly profess that they believe it is for the public good to" maintain the status quo.[36]

Allen did not want his position to be taken as radical. He emphasized that he was not opposed to the existence of banks per se; indeed, they were a necessary component of a commercial society. In fact the People's Party, Allen declared, sought to protect the rights not only of the masses, but those of the banks, both state and national, as well as those of "corporations and property."[37] Still, he made it clear that he was "unalterably opposed to farming out the sovereign power" of the state to private concerns where it was

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 10.

[37] Ibid., 5, 13. Quotation appears on 13.

to be used for private aggrandizement.[38] If Populists recognized the rights of the capitalist, they also insisted that he should receive no special treatment, for, as Allen put it, "the rights of the hod-carrier are as sacred under the Constitution ... as the rights of corporations."[39]

Rather than cater to special interests or to big business, Allen thought the Senate's duty was to promote the welfare "of the humblest citizen of this land as well as the most exalted." He contended that the major parties and their Senate representatives had long ignored the privileges of the common people, and in so doing had not only allowed "special interests" to achieve preponderant status but had precipitated the current "stringency and distress" evident across much of the nation.[40] This perspective had a parallel antecedent in Ignatius Donnelly's preamble to the Omaha platform. In it, Donnelly, a longtime political activist and Populist from Minnesota, charged that for a generation the Republicans and Democrats had fought "for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs [had] been inflicted upon the suffering people."[41] Seeing little to indicate that the old parties were about to reform themselves, Allen admonished Senate Democrats to switch their affiliations to the People's Party: "There is no other place for you. You must either go there or you must go over to the gold bugs."[42] In addition he warned that until "the people" determined to "rise up in their might" to effect legislative

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[38] Ibid., 5.

[39] Ibid., 13.

[40] Ibid., 4, 11. Quotations on 4.

[41] National Party Platforms, 90.

[42] Allen, 11.

reform and a "change of complexion" in the congress, there was "no hope" for improved conditions for the people.[43]

One of the themes that would recur often in Allen's rhetoric was the proposition that much, and perhaps most, economic legislation enacted by congress served a class function by promoting the interests of financial elites to the detriment of working people. On September 18, during a debate on how the federal government ought to respond to the problem of train-robbing, Allen blamed congressional actions for what he perceived as a rising crime problem. It was, he stated, unrealistic to think "that class legislation, such as has emanated from Congress, will not produce lawless bands of men."[44]

In rationalizing his response to congressional legislation, Allen frequently cited the Constitution. This corresponds with historian Norman Pollack's observation that "[i]n making governmental responsiveness the linchpin" of their preferred form of capitalism, Populists "necessarily emphasized a constitutional perspective." Populists depended on the Constitution to delineate "the state's powers and responsibilities, to adduce proofs for its sovereign capacity," to justify its activism, and to formulate "a statement of rights originating from the literalist application of American political tenets."[45] When during the train-robbing debate some senators suggested that a

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[43] Ibid., 10.

[44] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, p. 1562. The legislation under debate was a resolution calling for an Interstate Commerce Committee investigation of the train-robbing problem. See 1558. For the debate on 18 September, see 1558-1564.

[45] Norman Pollack, The Just Polity: Populism, Law, and Human Welfare (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 7. For Populists the Constitution was, Pollack explains, a "preeminent symbol." (67) This point is worth emphasizing, for it suggests that if the Populists were not exactly radicals (that is, they did not seek to change fundamentally the federal governmental structure or the competitive capitalist economic system), they did seek to transform the current aims and processes of government by discrediting

committee determine whether congress possessed authority in the matter under the Constitution's interstate commerce clause, Allen remarked that "it would be about as proper to refer to some committee the question of whether the sun shines or not." The issue was clear-cut: since congress had authority under the Constitution to regulate interstate commerce, and since crimes against interstate railways affected interstate commerce, the Senate need not hesitate in considering legislative solutions.[46]

On still another topic of concern to Populists, the welfare of the urban laborer, Allen showed strong signs of a Populist orientation. The Omaha Platform had affirmed that "the interests of rural and civic labor are the same; their enemies are identical," and lamented that the pay of workers in the cities was held down by "imported pauperized labor."[47] On October 11, Allen reproved the captains of industry and the federal government for routinely employing force in dealing with labor unrest. In his lengthy remarks on the subject, Allen pointed to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where federal troops were used to put down a peaceful demonstration by employees of the Northern Pacific Railroad. He recounted the "disgraceful affair" at the Homestead Steel Works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where Pinkerton agents hired by Andrew Carnegie initially failed, but state militia ultimately succeeded in busting the union there. He cited developments in New York, where, he said, the New York Central Railroad had unfairly discriminated against members of the Knights of Labor, and in Buffalo, where a

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the prevailing political ethos, which they viewed as a perversion of American constitutionalism, properly understood. See Pollack, 108-113.

[46] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, p. 1564

[47] National Party Platforms, 89, 91. The first quotation is on the latter, the second on the former.

corporate executive (a "tin soldier") had commanded the state militia in a cruel and unwarranted attack on "organized and honest laborers." All of this had occurred despite the fact that the workers' grievances--unfair employment practices and wage decreases--were legitimate, and even though they were the "natural outgrowth of vicious legislation."[48]

Allen believed that, so long as laborers did not infringe on the property rights of others, they could legally assemble to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. Capitalists, Allen reminded his colleagues, enjoyed the right to cooperate with each other to further their goals. In fact, whenever a group of "money sharks" met in New York to formulate strategies designed to bring them great profits at the expense of the people, it was respectfully referred to as "a consultation of financiers." Yet, when "honest" workingmen, compelled by "desperation" and lacking other options, conducted public protests, they were pronounced "a mob" and confronted by policemen and soldiers.[49] On November 3, the last day of the special session, Allen introduced a resolution aimed at eliciting the aid of State Department officials in temporarily curbing immigration as a countermeasure to the high unemployment rate.[50]

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[48] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), p. 337-338. The "vicious legislation" quotation is on 337, the remainder on 338.

[49] Ibid., 338.

[50] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3, p. 3112-13. Earlier, during the national-bank debates (Sept. 13), Allen charged that the Republicans had maintained the tariff, which had originally been implemented on a large scale as a temporary expedient (under the Morill Tariff Act of 1861) to finance the Union military effort during the Civil War, in order to extract "tribute" from the country's working class. Presumably, he referred here to farm, as well as industrial, workers. See Allen, 9. On 2 Sept., Labor Day, Allen offered a resolution directing the Senate, as a way of honoring both workers and their employees, to shut down for the holiday. Including Allen and Peffer only eight senators voted for the measure. See CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, p. 1187-1188. Some who voted against it were not opposed to a gesture of respect for labor, or at

Of course the special session's raison d'être, and Allen's foremost concern, was the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. As Williams points out, during the years 1894-1896 the effort to expand silver coinage became not only a "social movement," but "one of the largest in American history."[51] Allen's preoccupation with promoting silver grew to full force in 1893, the year after the Omaha Platform had called for the "free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1."[52] On June 14, lecturing in Beatrice, Nebraska, Allen criticized the notion that additional gold was the answer for the current financial crisis. Prophetically--and correctly, as later events would prove--he pointed out that the large bond issues to which the government had resorted to maintain its gold supply would require further issues down the road in order to replenish the treasury reserve.[53] Allen averred that there was insufficient gold "on earth or in the bowels of the earth" to meet the future demands for currency.[54]

During the first week of August, Allen gave a well-received pro-silver speech at a congress of the American Bimetallic League in Chicago. The object of the silverites, Allen explained, was to ensure that the supply of currency was adequate to meet the

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least did not want to admit that they were. Voorhees, for example, supported Allen's intent, but preferred to assist the working man by remaining in session for the purpose of working toward alleviating his duress. See Ibid., 1187.

[51] Williams, 106.

[52] National Party Platforms, 91.

[53] Faulkner, 154-57; Davis Rich Dewey, National Problems, 1885-1897 (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1907), 267-76.

[54] Daily Times (Beatrice), n.d., AP.

commercial needs of the people.[55] Unfortunately, however, the money supply had been so decreased that "the bankers and brokers" held total sway over it.[56] To the often-heard charge that silver mine-owners were the primary force behind the free-silver campaign, Allen countered that, while the mine-owners were indeed concerned about the repeal issue, the people were "infinitely more" interested in it, as it touched on the well being of everyone.[57]

Allen held that gold bondholders had the greatest interest of all in the repeal issue. This was because the elimination of silver, which comprised "half of the money of the world," would double the payments owed by those indebted to them.[58] They were responsible for what he perceived as the contrived quality of the financial panic earlier in the year. "The metropolitan bankers," he alleged, had directed the urban newspapers to frighten the citizenry into believing that the Sherman law was causing the withdrawal of American gold and its transfer overseas. The people were then told that the country faced an extreme financial crisis, the necessary solution for which was the abrogation of the Sherman Act. Unfortunately for the bankers, this strategy failed because the citizens of the prairie and plains states, maintaining their faith in both the system and their countrymen, remained calm, which in turn caused the financial managers themselves to

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[55] Ackley World, n.d., AP; Hicks, 313.

[56] Clipping from unidentified (Madison, Nebraska) newspaper, 11 Aug. 1893, AP.

[57] Ackley World, n.d., AP.

[58] Ibid.

panic. According to Allen the latter subsequently implored "congress to restore their confidence and disabuse their minds" concerning the economy.[59]

In his address to the Bimetallic League, Allen embraced a theme he would return to often during the next few years: the domination of American financial processes by British investors. Americans were encouraged to believe, Allen stated, that "we cannot breathe properly except as we breathe through the lungs of old England." But the American people were "no more" approving "of British control of America[n] finances than they are in favor of British soldiery camping upon our people."[60] It was long past time, he insisted, for Americans to break the influence of England on their financial circumstances.[61]

Finally, apparently alluding to the Constitution's allowance for the use of silver as money, Allen equated support for silver coinage with patriotism and with proper regard for the Constitution. In propagating the cause of free silver he assured the convention that, while Senate Populists were not as adept at "political and parliamentary manoeuvering" as were their old-party colleagues, they would "keep in sight of the fox all the time."[62]

The halls of congress may have served as a den for this pernicious predator, but to Allen, the native habitat of this fox was New York City. On August 22, he told reporters

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[59] Unidentified (Madison) clipping, 11 Aug. 1893, AP.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ackley World, n.d., AP.

[62] Unidentified (Madison) clipping, 11 Aug. 1893, AP. Article I, Section 10, of the Constitution stipulates that "No State shall...make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a tender in Payment of Debts."

that "New York has ceased to be an American city." The republic's largest metropolis was not in accord with the remainder of the nation; its people comprised "an aristocracy," and the city was evolving into a kind of "money despot." New Yorkers, Allen thought, had a higher regard "for the beauties of the Alps than for the grandeur of the Rockies." Westerners considered the eastern section of the union overbearing and would transfer the federal capital "to St. Louis in fifteen minutes if we had the votes." Allen was certain that Americans' economic success required the demolition of New York's perilous influence over the rest of the nation. To these factors Allen attributed what he perceived as the growing rift between the western and eastern parts of the country.[63]

Two days later, Allen gave the first of his two lengthy speeches on the silver question during the special session. In it, he elaborated on the necessity of his amendment, introduced two days earlier, calling for the free coinage of silver (at 16:1) "under the same conditions" governing the mintage of gold.[64] In a general sense, such positive government action was a necessary intervention on behalf of the people "from the ranks of" which Allen came, who experienced and understood acutely "the effects of evil legislation." Although, as he explained, "they do not profess to have found a panacea for our national evils, or to have explored the depths and ramifications of

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[63] Norfolk (Nebraska) News, 24 Aug. 1893. For a criticism of Allen's remarks on the growing East-West sectional drift, see the editorial titled "An Absurd Prophecy," in the Kansas City (Missouri) Star, 7 Nov. 1893, AP.

[64] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 783. See also p. 584.

economic learning," they were bright enough to determine whether, and to what degree, particular legislation was in their interest.[65]

Allen complained that it was the interests of the people that seemed to get the least consideration in the debate over repeal. At times partisanship debased the discussion of the problem in the Senate.[66] Always, the possibility of resolution was prevented by the "selfishness" of vested commercial interests such as mortgage holders, investors, and the mining companies. Were this factor eliminated, Allen thought, the currency problem could be resolved with relatively little difficultly.[67] But the earnest appeals of the people had been disregarded, and the country had deviated "from its original constitutional moorings into the shallow and treacherous waters of unchecked power." Their very survival at stake, the people had thus formed the People's Party, "founded upon Jeffersonian simplicity, and imperatively demanding a return of the nation to first principles of government."[68]

Regarding the currency problem, the best that could be said of the two major parties was that, historically, each had some record of officially advocating bimetallism. The Democratic Party, as Allen pointed out by citing numerous examples, had continuously expressed its support for the concept since as early as 1836, while the Republican Party platforms of 1888 and 1892 boasted of the allegiance of the GOP to

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[65] Ibid., 784.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 789.

[68] Ibid., 784-85. All quotes on 784.

bimetallism. In 1892, however, both parties deceived the American people by declaring themselves for bimetallism, while their presidential candidates (Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison) were completely dedicated to establishing a gold-based currency no matter what its effect on the commonweal.[69] Allen was likewise unimpressed by the professed interest of the major parties in realizing an international agreement for bimetallism. It was widely believed, he reported, not only that an agreement would not be achieved, but that talk of it was "mere subterfuge," a stalling tactic designed to allow "the money power...time to reduce the masses to subjection" and muffle their dissent.[70]

Similarly, the Sherman law was "a miserable makeshift" meant to placate the people while, at the same time, unlawfully denying them their right to a true bimetallic standard. The effect of withholding from Americans, as Allen put it, "one-half of their constitutional money," was to largely expand the financial burden on debtors by decreasing the worth of their assets and labor, while expanding the fortunes of the wealthy.[71] He insisted, however, that the Sherman law itself was not responsible for "the evil that confronts us."[72] Allen expressed his general attitude on the matter in dramatic, almost apocalyptic, terms. The Sherman law, he affirmed

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[69] Ibid., 784-85. For the major-party statements on bimetallism in 1892, see National Party Platforms, 88, 93.

[70] CR, 788.

[71] Ibid. The preamble of the Omaha Platform includes the assertion that the purpose behind the demonetization of silver was the lowering of the "value of all forms of property as well as human labor, and the" volume of money was "purposely abridged to fatten usurers, bankrupt enterprise, and enslave industry." See National Party Platforms, 90.

[72] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 784.

> is the last feeble barrier that stands between the patriotic and industrious masses of our people and that horde of insolent, aggressive, and ravenous money-changers and gamblers of Lombard street and Wall street, who for private gain would, through a shrinking and contracted volume of money, turn the world back into the gloom of the Dark Ages with all its attendant evil and misery. We cannot suffer this to be done; we must stand like a wall of fire against its accomplishment.

Although the Sherman law was flawed, its retention was essential, Allen argued, until such time as it was replaced by improved legislation.[73]

Allen defended his position by way of a thoughtful analysis of what he saw as the fundamentals of the money problem. First, he emphasized the universality of the use of silver as money. From ancient times to the present, silver had been utilized as currency across the "civilized world."[74] In the early years of the American republic, he contended, silver was considered to be a more important form of money than gold. In addition to citing the reference to silver in the Constitution, Allen reported that, in the enactment of dozens of distinct "statutes and resolutions" during the past century, congress had acknowledged silver "as the money of the Constitution."[75]

Second, Allen stressed the point that the Constitution granted Congress the authority to "regulate the value" of the currency.[76] Here, however, an important qualification had to be recognized. Congress, he explained, had been given the authority

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[73] Ibid., 788-89. Quotation is on both pages. In judging the relative merit of bimetallism and the Sherman Act, Allen contended that "It may quiet the fears of the weak and lull the thoughtless into" a false sense of "security, but [bimetallism] is merely the song of the siren calling the nation to destruction." As "base, ignoble and cowardly as the Sherman act is and ever has been, it is infinitely better than this limp, meaningless, and useless" professed commitment to resurrecting the bimetallic standard. See ibid., 789.

[74] Ibid., 787. "Silver," read the Omaha Platform, "which has been accepted as coin since the dawn of history, has been demonetized to add to the purchasing power of gold..." See National Party Platforms, 90.

[75] Ibid., 785. The exact number of such statutes, according to Allen, was sixty-one.

[76] Ibid.

to control the "value of money as money, thus distinguishing clearly between money and the metal upon which it is stamped."[77] In agreement with one of the cardinal tenets of nineteenth-century Greenbackism that money was merely an instrument and that the inherent worth of the material used for currency should matter less than its legally ascribed monetary value, Allen viewed money as "a medium of exchange."[78] While the belief that money had to possess intrinsic value was widely accepted, Allen argued that if the value of money is governed by "natural" rather than man-made laws, then the Founding Fathers had wasted their time in granting to Congress authority over currency values.[79] The framers of the Constitution intended for Congress to regulate "a thing called money;" that is, unless their aim was to control the "commercial value" of the material used as currency, a notion "as absurd as the Pope's bull against the comet." Congress need only exercise its regulatory power and silver would assume its rightful position alongside gold as full legal tender.[80]

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[77] Ibid., 786.

[78] Ibid., 789. On Greenbackism, see "The Influence of Edward Kellogg Upon American Radicalism, 1865-1896," chapter four in Chester McArthur Destler, American Radicalism, 1865-1901: Essays and Documents (New London: Connecticut College Press, 1946), 50-77, especially 52; Walter T. K. Nugent, "Money, Politics, and Society: The Currency Question" chapter six in The Gilded Age, ed. H. Wayne Morgan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970), 109-27, especially 119-20. For Greenbackers, "good money," Nugent writes, "is anything people think is good money." See 126. For brief but useful summaries of Greenback ideology, see Sidney Fine, Laissez Faire and the General Welfare State: A Study of Conflict in American Thought, 1865-1901 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956), 304-309; and Edward R. Lewis, A History of American Political Thought: From the Civil War to the World War (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), 267-73.

[79] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 785. See also Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 21.

[80] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 786 (for quotations), 789. In Democratic Promise, Goodwyn writes that the Populist Party was "the final and most powerful assertion of the greenback critique of the American monetary system." But denial of the necessity of intrinsic value as an ingredient of legitimate money does not certify one's status as a Populist. Goodwyn points out that like gold, silver was still "hard" (that is, bullion-based) money, and not "soft" (that is, "fiat," or irredeemable) money. Goodwyn,

Allen's third point on the money problem was that, since congress is charged with the responsibility for regulating the nation's money, it had a "duty" to exercise that power on account of the present economic hardship. Demonstrating a certain flair for hyperbole, he alleged that "commerce, industry, and labor lie prostrate and bleeding at every pore throughout the length and breadth of the" country.[81] The narrowing of the money supply, moreover, generated more of the current economic distress than "all other causes" together. His research into the matter led Allen to believe that the constricted money supply was a leading cause of the widespread bank failures, and compelled him to ask: when many bankers lacked enough money to conduct their routine business, how were wage-workers and farmers to stave off economic ruin? Despite the banking crisis, credit, he argued, was overabundant, while real money was too scarce.[82] All of this contributed to Allen's inference that, of all the fields of research, "the science of finance" had progressed the least. He marveled at the idea that, with all of man's scientific and

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15, 21. A proposal for issuing fiat money was part of the Omaha Platform in the form of the subtreasury plan (under which farmers could store nonperishable crops in government warehouses, borrow legal-tender paper money—printed expressly for loans under the program—at low interest against the value of their crops, and delay sale of the crops until market conditions were more favorable), although it was presented as one *possibility* for expanding the money supply. See Goodwyn, 52-53; and National Party Platforms, 91. One of the other financial demands, the call for silver coinage, was included in the 1880 and 1884 platforms of the Greenback party. See Fine, 308.

[81] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 787.

[82] Ibid., 788. Allen emphasized that he had no great love for silver per se. He announced that, were anyone to persuade him that the world's gold supply was enough "to do the money work of the world with," he would accept a gold standard. Ibid.,787. Were the government to circulate an amount of money commensurate with the needs of the economy, it would move "surplus cash" out of banks and "into productive industries." Ibid., 456. Internationally, however, there was insufficient silver money to meet the needs of the 900 million people (of a total world population of 1.2 billion) who, Allen claimed, relied on silver for money.(789-90) No nation, Allen contended, had ever suffered from an excess of "sound" money, but history was "replete with instances of nations whose civilization has been lost or turned back for centuries" due to a decreasing money supply. Ibid., 788.

technical achievements, some could deny the possibility that methods existed which could be employed to hinder "the recurrence of financial panics and depressions and the" conveying of the wealth "of the many into the hands of the few."[83]

Allen advised that currency-regulation should be placed on a "sounder and more scientific basis."[84] It was significant then, that his speech had a somewhat social-scientific character. In making his case Allen did not merely state his opinions but, in a fashion that was to be characteristic of his entire Senate career, he buttressed his positions by frequently citing historical and statistical evidence. Through the course of this single speech, Allen cited statistics from two government reports, repeated specific phrases in the Constitution three times, he drew on passages from a business journal, quoted from six national or state party platforms and referred to about a dozen others. In addition, he quoted liberally from the opinions of eight specific court cases, recounted the recent comments of two Senate colleagues, and read from the Congressional Record excerpts of speeches by Senators Daniel Webster (1836) and John Sherman (1868).[85]

This is not to say that Allen's marked reliance on authorities and his persistent historical references were necessarily indicative of sound reasoning. Nevertheless, these seem to be demonstrative of Pollack's observation that "Populism sought to combat vagueness." "This," he writes, "helps to explain Peffer's statistics, [1892 Populist presidential candidate James B.] Weaver's extensive case studies, the detailed editorials

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[83] Ibid., 799.

[84] Ibid., 788.

[85] Ibid., 784-88.

in literally hundreds of agrarian newspapers" and "the interminable speeches, three and four hours long," based "on the body of information patiently gathered and circulated."[86]

Allen began the peroration of his first major anti-repeal speech in dramatic fashion, stating that "millions" of Americans, now enduring "ineffable misery" as a result of "this unholy warfare waged upon their rights," were watching the Senate, uncertain whether its actions would "enslav[e]...them and their children for generations to come," or release them from "financial bondage." He finished with a euphonic metaphor: "If we act wisely and patriotically," he predicted, and provide the people of the nation enough "sound and scientific money to enable them to set all the energies of nature and man at work producing wealth," then "once more the sunlight of prosperity, like the natural sun that dispels the mist and the dew, will kiss away the clouds of doubt and fear, and we will witness an era of prosperity more wonderful than the world has ever known."[87]

A few weeks later a leading Populist newspaper praised the speech and reported that, from all parts of the country, "scholars, writers, economists, lawyers, judges and men of learning" were asking for transcripts. "It is a fact," the paper proclaimed, that Allen's address "is being studied by many of the brightest minds in the United States."[88]

For the next six weeks Allen continued to speak out on the Senate floor against unconditional repeal of the Sherman Act. He introduced resolutions for the purpose of

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[86] Pollack, 68.

[87] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 1, p. 790.

[88] American Nonconformist (Indianapolis), clipping with a file-date of 18 Sept. 1893, AP. "Being a poor man," the paper stated, Allen initially planned an order for "only a few thousand copies" to be delivered to constituents so as to keep them abreast of his attempts "to do his duty in defending populist

obtaining information about the government's handling of monetary affairs, and he offered yet another free silver amendment. He discussed various nineteenth-century developments in international finance and their relationship to shifts in monetary policy in countries such as England and Prussia.[89] To those who blamed the Sherman Act for causing the finance-hysteria, Allen objected that there was undoubtedly no "boy in this nation fifteen years of age, who has studied this question, who honestly believes that."[90] He continued to insist, however, that the Sherman law needed replacement and that the constricted money supply was wreaking havoc on the country. He railed against the increasing influence in Washington of "the money power," and warned that the proposed repeal would place Americans in "servitude." He talked about poverty and hunger in America, of the "brutal" police response to bread riots in New York City, and condemned congress for its inaction. Things would get still worse, Allen argued, with the enactment of unconditional repeal, for that would bind the laborers and farmers of America "to the chariot wheel of the plutocrat now and hereafter."[91] He suggested that Democrats could demonstrate their commitment to reform by dropping out of their party and enlisting in the People's Party, which he confidently asserted would achieve supremacy in the 1896 election.[92]

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principles." For some basic information on this important Populist paper which was originally published in Winfield, Kansas, see Goodwyn, 99-100; and Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference, 25, 73.

[89] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, pp. 1188, 1209, 1568, 1671, 2060, 2185, 2259, 2460.

[90] Allen, 10.

[91] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, pp. 1833-35. For quotations: "brutal" on 1834, "servitude" on 1835, the remainder on 1833.

[92] Allen, 11.

Overcoming the spirited opposition of Congressman Bryan and other silverites, the House of Representatives passed its repeal measure overwhelmingly on August 28, 1893.[93] The next day pro-silver senators, most of them from the South and West (the division on repeal was regional rather than partisan), initiated a filibuster. That obstructionist tactic was still in progress when, on October 7, Allen took the Senate floor to give the second of his major anti-repeal speeches. He began with an indirect criticism of Senate protocol. He recalled that on the occasion of his first address in the Senate, he had sensed that "I ought to apologize" for violating the custom "that a new member shall listen rather than talk." Moments later, when Allen declined an offer to call for a quorum and a colleague responded that other members would benefit by being present at Allen's speech, his pompous answer demonstrated another facet of his personality that was sometimes evident: "I will make them hear me," Allen swore, "whether they are here or not."[94]

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[93] Jeanette Paddock Nichols, "The Politics and Personalities of Silver Repeal in the United States Senate," American Historical Review XLI, no. 1 (Oct. 1935): 26-29; Peck, 339-45; Donald R. Matthews, Yeas and Nays: Normal Decision-Making in the U.S. House of Representatives (New York: Wiley, 1975), 113. For a broad outline of how the legislation moved through the House, lengthy excerpts from the debate, and the votes of House members, see Appleton's Cyclopaedia, 226-39.

[94] For Allen quotations see CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), pp. 289. By Senate standards Allen's behavior was atypical: "Freshmen were...intimidated by their surroundings." Custom prescribed "that newcomers not deliver any speeches in their first session, but they were usually too frightened in any case." Rothman, 145. In this regard Allen consciously or not followed the precedent set by Senator Peffer who, upon taking office, declared that he would not observe tradition concerning speechifying by freshmen. Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 108. By Populist lights what was perceived as Allen's (and Peffer's) presumptuousness was, properly understood, simply the expression of a populistic, egalitarian, sensibility. "Populism...is unambiguously committed to the principle of respect...[and] has always rejected...the politics of deference....It is unimpressed by titles and other symbols of social rank." Christopher Lasch, Revolt of the Elites: and the Betrayal of Democracy (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 106. On the filibuster and the sectional nature of the coinage debate, see "Silver Coinage Controversy," in Andrew C. McLaughlin and Albert Bushnell Hart, eds., Cyclopedia of American

Such episodes occurred only sporadically, however. Allen was usually serious and assertive on the floor of the Senate and courteous to his colleagues. Allen began the address by tracing the historical development of coinage laws in the United States, paying particular attention to the demonetization of silver in 1873 and the reinstatement of silver money on a limited basis in 1878. The Bland-Allison Act of that year authorized signatories to contracts to designate the exact form of money they would accept for debts due them, thus allowing financiers to virtually annul the silver laws.[95] The insistence by many senators that the resumption of silver coinage would, as a practical matter, require an international monetary agreement was "mere subterfuge." Past monetary conferences had not only been wholly unproductive, but had also been dominated by those who sought to put an end to the use of silver as money and thereby decrease the wealth of working people. Allen found the very idea that the United States could not unilaterally implement free silver coinage "a monstrous proposition."[96]

Allen devoted most of his attention, however, to a criticism of "that chief of heresies," intrinsic value. As he had done earlier in the session, Allen argued that monetary values were established by law. He backed up this contention by discussing the varied materials which had been used as money in the history of Western and Near Eastern Civilization and by quoting liberally from the works of economists Henry Dunning MacLeod, Henri Cernuschi, and Jean Baptiste Say. One legal-tender dollar was

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Government (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), 309-12; Franklin L. Burdette, Filibustering in the Senate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 58-62; and Nichols, 30-38.

[95] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), pp. 289-90.

[96] Ibid., 296.

as good as the next one, Allen contended, which is precisely why the "Shylocks" and the "money lords" who possessed most of the gold supply favored monometallism. The concept of intrinsic value ought to be abandoned so that the vocation of the "money changer, like the occupation of Othello," would disappear.[97]

Allen was unable to complete his speech on October 7 because of its considerable length, and he waited for his next opportunity to address the Senate and resume his remarks. On the same day, Senator Voorhees, chairman of the Finance Committee and chief representative for Cleveland in the battle for repeal in the Senate, announced that on October 11 the Senate would be held in continuous round-the-clock session. The intent was to wear down the minority, thereby ending the filibuster and allowing for a vote on repeal.[98]

Thus when Allen took the Senate floor on October 11, he was a principal figure in an intriguing and somewhat tense political drama. When he began speaking at 5:15 p.m., the visitors' galleries of the Senate chamber "were packed to overflowing," and

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[97] Ibid., 290-94. For quotations: "heresies" and "money changer" on 290, others on 294. MacLeod (1821-1902) was a Scottish lawyer, banker and economic theorist who argued that value does not inhere in objects but is ascribed by thought. Ludwig H. Mai, Men and Ideas in Economics: A Dictionary of World Economists Past and Present (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1975), 144-45. A quite obscure figure today, Italian Enrico Cernushi (1821-1896) was a classical political economist, monetary theorist (who may have originated the word bimetallism), agitator exiled in the revolutionary upheavals of 1848-1850 and currency director of the Bank of Paris. Century Cyclopedia of Names, 1954; Grand Larousse Encyclopedique, 1960; Murray Rothbard, Classical Economics: An Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought, 2 vols. (Brookfield, Vt.: E. Elgar Pub., 1995), 2: 268. Say (1767-1832) was the founder of the classical school of political economy in France, businessman, college professor, and the most important popularizer of Smithian doctrine in Europe. John Fred Bell, A History of Economic Thought (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1967), 277-85.

[98] Ibid., 296; Burdette, 62; Nichols, 37-38.

nobody knew for sure how many nights senators would be confined to the chamber and adjacent rooms within the capitol.[99]

Allen picked up his speech precisely where he had stopped four days earlier.[100] Continuing his critique of intrinsic value, Allen offered additional historical information on the use of silver as money, and again quoted Say on the instrumental function of the latter. But if money was nothing more than "a medium of exchange," if the value of money did not inhere in the commercial value of the metal which served to represent it, whence came that value?

The wellspring was work. Thus labor was the criteria for determining value, and was, as Allen quoted from David Ricardo, "the ultimate price that is paid for everything." In constructing a theoretical basis for his argument, Allen made the fundamental point that a "perfect measure of anything," necessarily begins with "something absolute and invariable." Rather than an absolute, value is a "relation," the constant measure of which is indeterminable.[101]

That "relation" was labor and the volume of currency. The economic force of money is determined by the amount "in circulation against the quantity of business

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[99] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), p. 296; clipping, unidentified Middletown, New York, newspaper, n.d., AP. See also Washington Star (Eve.), 12 Oct. 1893, AP.

[100] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), p. 296. The day before, Oct. 10, Allen submitted another resolution of inquiry into the government's handling of its finances. See pt. 2, p. 2361.

[101] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), pp. 296-98, 315, 334. Quotations on 297. Ricardo (1772-1823) was an English political economist and Member of Parliament. Allen also relied here on the writing of American laissez-faire economist Arthur Latham Perry (1830-1905). For short biographies of these men, see Mai, 177, 189-90.

[which included labor] and property in the country."[102] Therefore, after supporting his argument with lengthy readings from works of political economy, including Edward Kellogg's Labor and Other Capital, Allen counseled: "Let us now cease to worship the golden calf of money as a measure of value and give the praise and credit to labor where it justly belongs." He went on: "Labor, and the law of supply and demand, a child of labor, measure values."[103]

For Allen there existed two other major fallacies about money. The first was the fallacy of contraction, the idea propagated by gold advocates that shrinking the money supply would not lessen the cost of labor or property. Allen thought the proponents of this view hypocritical, for they were against increasing the amount of money in circulation because, ironically, they expected it would raise the prices of both. He also thought them misinformed or misguided because, he asserted, each financial panic in American history had coincided with pronounced currency deflation.[104]

In fact, in the past quarter-century, the contraction fallacy had caused more harm "than all other" ideas about money put together. Currently, in addition to the hardship it visited upon agriculturalists, contraction and its effects were causing an increase in crime

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[102] Ibid., 299.

[103] Ibid., 297-98. Quotations on 297. Kellogg (1790-1858) was an American businessman turned financial theorist whose "producers' philosophy" had a substantial influence on Gilded Age labor reformers, Greenbackers, and agrarian radicals. See Destler, "The Influence of Edward Kellogg," 50-77. For quotation see 76. The full title of Kellogg's book (which Allen called "Labor and Capital") is Labor and Other Capital: The Rights of Each Secured and the Wrongs of Both Eradicated. Or, an exposition of the cause why few are wealthy and many poor, and the delineation of a system, which, without infringing the rights of property, will give to labor its just reward (1849). Destler, 51.

[104] Ibid., 299, 309, 312, 337.

as well as a marked rise in business failures. Moreover, in Allen's view, if the historical record and the treatises of political economists demonstrated anything axiomatically, it was that constricted currency yielded expensive money and cheap property and labor. If continued, it would cause "the centralization of the wealth of a nation into the hands of a few, the ultimate debasement of labor, and the destruction of liberty itself."[105]

And there was now so little money in the country, Allen said, that "eight or ten thousand men" (of a population of almost sixty million) exercised command of it. In this regard the United States was following the lead of the British Empire, where contraction had led to an oligarchy in which thirty thousand men owned all of the land and where "not one" person "out of...a thousand ever own[ed] a foot of soil upon which their feet stand." Allen was amazed that, nevertheless, England was routinely characterized as an admirable society.[106] In America, Allen explained, the amount of currency in circulation

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[105] Ibid. As an example of Allen's use of history to support his arguments, he cited a relationship between the supply of money and both the fall of ancient Rome and the end of medieval feudalism. He read an excerpt of a quotation by Archibald Alison from N.A. Dunning's Philosophy of Price, which asserted that the demise of the Roman Empire resulted from "the decline in the silver and gold mines of Spain and Greece." In the sixteenth century, according to Dunning, discoveries of gold and silver in the New World brought about no less than the overthrow of the last vestiges of European feudalism. See 311-12, quote on 311. In addition to Perry, Ricardo, the American politician Henry Clay (1777-1852) and other authorities, Allen read, sometimes rather copiously, from works by Scottish philosopher and economist Adam Smith (1723-90), English utilitarian philosopher and classsical economist John Stuart Mill (1806-73), English utilitarian political economist William Stanley Jevons (1835-82), English free trade economist Henry Fawcett (1833-84), and English economic historian Thomas Doubleday (1790-1870). Demonstrating a readiness to align himself with at least some of the views of radical theorists, Allen quoted the French economist and Saint-Simonian Michel Chevalier (1806-79), about whom Allen asserted that "no greater authority on money has ever lived," (301), as well an economist identified only as "Prof. Thompson," possibly Irish socialist William Thompson (1775-1833), but probably the British utilitarian "philosophical radical" and "class-alliance" chartist Thomas Perronet Thompson (1783-1869). See ibid., 299-301, 303, 309, 312. For biographical sketches of the Thompsons, see Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, eds., The Dictionary of National Biography, 22 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921-22), 19:704-06 and 22 (Supplement):1252-54; and John Eatwell, Murray Milgate, and Peter Newman, eds., The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1987), 4:631-33.

[106] Ibid., 300.

was only $25 per capita, or one-half of its 1865 level. Worse still was the generally overlooked reality that, for common laborers, those who "earn their living by toil" rather than those who managed "gold and money as an occupation," the figure was less than $15.[107]

The third major fallacy was the idea that silver suffered in comparison to gold because there was simply too much of it. In all of history, Allen contended, there had never been "a ranker fallacy" than this notion of overproduction. It had been rejected, he said, by every "respectable" political economist since James Mill (1773-1836), a point he illustrated by reading, often at great length, from the works of ten different economic theorists, one of whom was the contemporary American reform advocate and Populist sympathizer Richard T. Ely.[108] In fact, Allen explained, the opposite of overproduction was true: as with all other elements of the economy, supply automatically created a demand for itself. On a global level the lessening demand for silver was the result of "concerted action" by the money power. By converting to a single gold standard, the advanced countries had arbitrarily created the prepotency of gold over silver; overproduction had had nothing to do with it. Allen added weight to this argument by

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[107] Ibid., 303, 309. Quotation on 309. The precise per-capita figure for the volume of money in 1865, Allen reported, was forty-seven dollars.(303) Later in his speech Allen cited a different figure for current per-capita currency volume in the United States: $18.19. He compared this to the $38.74 figure for France, whose citizens he called "typically prosperous."(321) On Allen's views on contraction, see also ibid., 302, 304-06.

[108] Ibid., 313. Allen also gave lengthy statistics from reports of the United States Mint and the Census Bureau. See 318, 321, 327-29. Mill was a British historian and economist. In addition to Mill, Perry, Say, and J.S. Mill, other economists Allen cited included American businessman and monetary theorist Amasa Walker (1799-1875), German historian and economist Wilhelm G. F. Roscher (1817-94), and Scottish economist James Ramsey McCulloch (1789-1864). (313-17) Mai, 152-53, 195, 235. On Ely, see Benjamin G. Rader, The Academic Mind and Reform: The Influence of Richard T. Ely in American Life (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1966), especially 89-90, 135.

citing a treasury department report showing that, since 1792, the production of gold had actually exceeded that of silver.[109]

Being under no obligation to operate on the same monetary standard as Europe, all the United States need do, Allen argued, was unilaterally declare silver equal to gold as a material for use as money. In so doing, silver would definitely acquire its full status as money in the United States, and, quite probably, in the rest of the world as well, where, Allen claimed, widespread sentiment existed for an enlargement of the money supply through silver coinage.[110]

Allen was still speaking when the Senate galleries began to thin out at two o'clock the next morning (October 12).[111] But he gave no indication that he was ready to

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[109] Ibid., 315, 318-19, 329. Quotation on 329.

[110] Ibid. See also 320, 322-25. Allen also discussed three other "fallacies," which, if judged by the amount of time he devoted to them, were of lesser import than the others. The first two were closely related to the three already discussed. The fallacy of the "double standard" was the notion that, because government policy reflected the biases of the gold lobby, silver and gold represented a dual monetary standard. In asserting that there existed a single standard with two coinage materials, Allen was really describing what he thought ought rightfully to be the case rather than current reality.(298-99, 339) The fallacy of "natural parity" was the idea that the demonetization of silver was necessary in order to establish parity between it and gold. But because no "natural" parity existed between the two metals, it was necessary to achieve it through legislation and the rejection of intrinsic value.(329) The remaining fallacy was "the balance of trade," which Allen defined as the belief that gold ought to be acquired through a "favorable" trade balance without regard to its effects on labor. In the "industrial war" it had to fight in its quest for profit, the money power sought "to industrially enslave" American workers.(329) The nation that acquires the most gold, Allen later explained, will be that which inflicts the worst economic degradation on its workers. But if the economic status of American laborers was to be reduced to that prevailing in Europe, then "what," Allen asked, "becomes of the glory of living under a republican form of government."(333) Not surprisingly, Allen maintained that the pursuit of gold was certainly an unquestionable evil if it required injuring "civilization itself"(Quotation on 329; see also 315, 331-32, 334).

In addition to his list of fallacies surrounding monetary theory Allen attempted to refute a charge that had been made in the Senate concerning the Sherman law: that it was principally responsible for the massive gold exports of recent years. Noting that most gold had returned to the United States and that the rest under proper conditions would return, Allen argued that if the Sherman Act had driven gold out of the country, it had also caused its return.(329-30)

[111] Washington Evening Star, 12 Oct. 1893, AP.

stop, and he continued to develop his argument against the repeal act. Allen spoke out in defense of the nation's poor, who suffered from both the evils of deflation and the indifference of the well-to-do. The latter group of citizens were probably more or less synonymous with the "money power," for which, in the interest of clarity, Allen provided a definition: that segment of the population in the United States and Europe who had power over, and who gained their enormous wealth from, passive investments—-loans, securities, bonds--and whose members wanted, because they benefited financially, a contracted money supply. In other words: "That body of men, small though it may be ... who are combined against the prosperity of the farmer and laborer throughout the civilized world." Allen quoted at length from the Populist newspaper, the American Non-Conformist, which he praised for its reporting on the purposes and plots of the financial community.[112]

Finally, Allen took up the subject of England. He recited a long historical list of that country's crimes against the American colonies and the United States, recounted its record of large-scale investments in American enterprises and lamented the influence the mother country exercised on account of its vast American holdings. England promoted the gold standard, Allen alleged, because her colonies produced large amounts of that metal, while, in contrast, they mined relatively little silver. Mixing the image of Shakespeare's ruthless usurer with allusions to Greek mythology, he declared that repeal of the Sherman Act was "a Trojan horse" that concealed "two monster Shylocks, like Argus, hundred-eyed, and, like Briareus, hundred-handed." These were the financial

[112] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), pp. 330, 335. Quotations on 330. See also 331, 336-39.

houses of Wall and Lombard streets, "both alike reaching out their long, bony, and merciless hands for their pounds of flesh," without regard for the well-being of the masses, concerned only with advancing their own interests. Will the Congress watch as the people are "crushed beneath the wheels of this modern Juggernaut," Allen asked, or will "we strangle the Laocoon before it strikes our people and our homes? Let those who answer yes go read the Declaration of Independence and answer to the people." England had done nothing, he argued, that should make congress want to "strengthen the sinews of the harpy hands of this colossal Shylock that has the debtors of the world by the throat."[113]

Again interposing classical references between references to the Bard of Avon's pitiless moneylender, Allen ended his speech in a grand, if rather histrionic, rhetorical style. For his part, he would

> ask no favors and wear the collar of no man; and when the Shylocks of England, Wall Street, and the East, and their coadjutors, ask that the rights of the people be surrendered, my answer, so far as I am concerned, will be that not one jot or tittle of these rights shall be surrendered while life lasts, if I can prevent it; we will meet them in Boeotia before they proceed to Attica, and we will not permit them to put their shirt of Nessus upon the back of American labor. We bid the Shylocks and money lords, here and hereafter, open and bitter defiance.[114]

Allen had talked all night (until 7:45 a.m., October 12), and in so doing he had made bit of history. At fourteen consecutive hours, his was the longest continuous

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[113] Ibid., 339-40. Quotations on 339. Because of the syntax here, it may appear that Allen believed Laocoon, the Trojan priest of Apollo who had attempted to convince his fellow citizens to disallow the entry of the wooden horse into the city, and who later was killed by serpents, to be an evil. The guess here is that it was a metaphor for the Populist, and perhaps for anyone else, who warned against the money power.

[114] Ibid., 340.

speech ever given in the Senate.[115] As such, and due to the surrounding circumstances, Allen's performance prompted commentary from newspapers all across the United States and England. An initial examination of editorial response suggests that opinion fell along ideological lines (pro versus anti-silver), and that even supporters of repeal were impressed by Allen's determination and stamina.[116]

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[115] Unidentified newspaper clipping titled "Our Own Allen," n.d., AP. For comments on Allen's speech as a record-breaker, see the Evening News (Washington, D.C.), 12 Oct. 1893, AP; The Wall Street Journal, 12 Oct. 1893, 1:2; Washington, D.C. Post, n.d., clipping, AP; Albert Shaw, "William V. Allen: A Populist. A Character Sketch and Interview," Review of Reviews, July 1894, 36; Madison Star Mail, 12 Jan. 1924. During the 1800s lengthy speeches were common in the Senate and occasionally ran for "several days." The duration of those addresses however, cannot be discerned from the Congressional Record. Accurate records of speech lengths were not kept until the twentieth century. See Byrd, 477.

[116] Excerpts from the Silver Knight (Washington, D.C.), n.d.; Washington D.C. Post, n.d.; Hartford (Connecticut) Telegram, 13 Oct. 1893; Derrick Oil City (Pennsylvania), 17 Oct. 1893; Fort Wayne (Indiana) Journal, 13 Oct. 1893, all in "William V. Allen," campaign pamphlet, n.d., AP; Butler County (Nebraska) Press, 20 Oct. 1893, clipping, AP; unidentified Montana newspaper, n.d., clipping of article titled "Senator Allen's Reward," AP; Weekly News, (Savannah, Georgia) 21 Oct. 1893, clipping, AP; Dakota Farmers Leader (Canton, S.D.), 09 Feb. 1894; Hicks, 312. For the reaction of some papers in the British Isles, see excerpts from the St. James Gazette (England), 15 Oct. 1893; Westminster Gazette (London), 13 Oct. 1893; Glasgow Herald (Scotland), 14 Oct. 1893, all in "Allen" pamphlet; Eastern Daily Press (Norwich, England), 14 Oct. 1893, clipping, AP; The Leeds Mercury, 11 Oct. 1893, clipping, AP; Newcastle Daily Chronicle (England), 14 Oct. 1893, clipping, AP. The authors of the few surviving letters responding to Allen's speech were very pleased with it. See Alexander Athey to Allen, 17 Oct. 1893; J. Adam Snider to Allen, 10 Mar. 1894; E.H. Woodruff to Allen, 20 Mar. 1894; A.G. Wolfenbarger to Allen, 2 Apr. 1894; G.S. Trowbridge to Allen, 14 Apr. 1894, all in AP. For the parliamentary record of Allen's speech, see the CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, pp. 2391-96. As the special session wound down Allen received what was probably his first exposure in national publications. The Nation was singularly unimpressed with Allen's long anti-repeal speech, which it thought "mostly wind." The Nation, 2 Nov. 1893, 1). Another observer wrote that although Allen was "a Populist, with a head filled with wrong financial notions," he was also "a conservative, pure, incorruptible man who won renown as an eminent attorney and a just, upright judge, whose acts of kindness and charity are legion." Frank Basil Tracy, "Rise and Doom of the Populist Party," Forum 16: (Oct. 1893): 247-48. See also the brief reference to Allen in Review of Reviews, Nov. 1893, 499. One paper that expressed high praise for Allen's speech was the Sioux City (probably Iowa) Journal. In rejecting intrinsic value, the Nebraska senator "really went to the root of the money question." "He got back," as a Journal writer put it, "to the fiat doctrine, which really is the basis upon which the populist theory rests, whether they all know it or not, and to which they must come." In the writer's view Allen was "bold, vigorous and radical, yet cool and self-contained." Senators Kyle and Peffer, Allen's Populist colleagues, "have suddenly been dwarfed by the abler and more forceful new senator." Excerpted in Omaha World-Herald, n.d., AP.

It should be noted here that Allen denied favoring "an unlimited issue of irredeemable paper money." Yet his position was ambiguous, perhaps even contradictory. On one hand, Allen railed against intrinsic value, voted for a fiat money amendment offered by Peffer (voted down fifty-eight to seven), and stated approvingly that on occasion limited amounts of legal tender fiat money had been issued in both the United

The continuous session that began with the start of Allen's speech (the October 11-12 installment) went on for almost forty hours, ending at 1:45 a.m., October 13, when the physically exhausted pro-repeal majority gave up, a real but minor victory for the silverites.[117] The filibuster continued, however, and Allen not only remained foursquare against repeal, but grew increasingly defiant as the majority edged toward victory. On October 16, when Senator John M. Palmer, an Illinois Democrat, accused Allen of deliberately wasting the Senate's time with his lengthy speechmaking, Allen, alluding to the influence of President Cleveland on pro-repeal Democrats, belligerently responded that "I am not here with a brass collar around my neck, as some Senators are in this chamber."[118]

The denouement was on October 24, when a group of farm-state Democrats, under intense pressure from the President, gave up resistance, thereby ending the filibuster.[119] During the next week Allen expressed disappointment with the outcome, calling repeal the "most iniquitous" legislation ever passed in Congress. Even when it had become evident that the cause was hopelessly lost, he proclaimed his willingness to fight until the battle could be won, a sentiment he demonstrated by introducing two

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States and Great Britain. On the other hand, he denied that he sought such an issue of money, and at one point stated that, in point of historical fact, paper money printed and used "in civilized countries has been a redeemable paper money." CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3 (Appendix), p. 292 (includes quotations). See also 299, 330. Information on the Peffer amendment is in Clarence Nelson Roberts, "A Congressional History of the Populists" (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri, 1936), 39. A sympathetic overview that contains numerous excerpts of Allen's Senate speeches during the special session, with special emphasis on his Oct. 7 and 11 marathon effort, is in Tipton, 362-80.

[117] Nichols, 39-40.

[118] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 2, p. 2541.

[119] Burdette, 66-68; Nichols, 50-51.

foredoomed amendments providing for silver coinage.[120] On October 30 the Senate passed the repeal bill by a vote of forty-three to thirty-two.[121] On November 3, the last day of the session, Allen spoke in favor of postponing adjournment. The Senate, he stated, should begin work on tariff reform and on legislation to mitigate the harmful effects of the repeal bill, which he asserted were already becoming manifest.[122]

After the session Allen told a public audience that the federal government was quickly evolving into an aristocracy.[123] The next day he and the rest of the Populist congressional bloc, with Senators Stewart and John P. Jones of Nevada, released a lengthy statement to the American people condemning repeal of the Sherman Act in particular and the movement for gold monometallism generally. The struggle between the few favoring "gold oligarchy," and the people, fighting for "constitutional liberty," was, the silverites asserted, "momentous and irrepressible." They called on their fellow citizens to crush the gold conspiracy, participants of which, they claimed, during the repeal debate had filled the mail of opponents with "intimidation and threats of personal violence." Subsequent elections, the address contended, would determine "whether this is a government of caste or a government of the people, whether gold shall be king and

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[120] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3, pp. 2889, 2920, 2925. Quotation is on 2889.

[121] Ibid., 2958; Matthews, 113.

[122] CR, 53-1, 1893, vol. 25, pt. 3, pp. 3112-13. The New York Sun (4 Nov. 1893), reported that on 3 November the Populist senators briefly tried to initiate a filibuster in order to extend the session. Clipping, AP.

[123] Clipping from unidentified newspaper, titled "'Senator Allen Heard' an Account of a 'Populist Rally at Washington Hall,'" AP.

the people subjects, or whether" the people would assert their constitutional prerogatives and recapture the government.[124]

Looking back on the special session, the Sioux City Journal, which was already speaking favorably of Allen for president in 1896, held that he was the foremost exponent of Populist principles in the Senate.[125] Perhaps so. What was probably far less debatable at the time, however, was that, with the depression showing no signs of abating, there would be in the upcoming regular session much reason to further elaborate on those principles.

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[124] New York Tribune, 5 Nov. 1893, AP. Another paper, dated 6 Nov., referred to the statement as a "Manifesto." Unidentified clipping, AP.

[125] Sioux City Journal, clipping, n.d., AP.

CHAPTER THREE

Legislation and the Commonweal: "Omaha Populism" in the Depths of Depression, 1894-1895

> "We were always under the impression that the supreme test of Populism was the acceptance of [the Omaha] platform ... "
> Charles X. Matthews, editor of the Populist newspaper
> The American Non-Conformist, February, 1895[1]

Commenting on the dim view Karel Bicha takes of Senator Allen in Western Populism, historian David Trask, while concurring that Allen was not a Populist, took Bicha to task for using the Omaha Platform of 1892 as the standard for substantiating Populist commitment. Formulated as a national campaign manifesto designed to appeal to diverse constituencies, the platform was meant to "establish a loose sense of common purpose" rather than to state an essential doctrine that required complete devotion. At the time of Allen's election, Trask remarked, it is likely that few Populists adhered to the whole platform. "Only later," he wrote "did the splinter, middle-of-the-road faction" demand allegiance to all elements of the Omaha document.[2]

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[1] Quoted in Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 208.

[2] David S. Trask, review of Western Populism: Studies in an Ambivalent Conservatism, by Karel Bicha, Nebraska History 59 (1978): 152. Beyond the fact that Allen was elected with the help of Democratic votes, Trask offered no analysis or evidence to support his dismissal of Allen's Populism. Allen's reliance on Democratic votes for his election has also been emphasized by Peter Argersinger, who suggested that the Democrats' support of Allen is indicative of the latter's illegitimacy as a Populist. However, given that Allen was an announced Populist and that he insisted he embraced the party's principles, and with the Nebraska legislature that elected him having sixty-two Republicans, fifty-three Populists, and eighteen Democrats, we ought to ask: (1) What were the Democrats, eleven of whom were Bryanite liberals supposed to do, remain firmly committed to one of their own, none of whom stood any chance of winning? Throw their support to the Republicans, for whom Bryanism was radical nonsense?

Trask was correct in recognizing the diversity within Populism, but his rejection of Bicha's criteria for measuring the movement was misguided. While Populists had various concerns and commitments, the Omaha Platform, as Robert McMath has written, was "the clearest and most unadulterated expression of Populist political thought."[3] At the Omaha Convention it was drawn up swiftly and with "little controversy."[4] As John Hicks observed, over time Populists gave it "a sort of religious sanction" and its demands achieved the status of "a sacred creed."[5] As Populist Senator William Peffer put it, the principles expressed in the platform were to Populists "what the Apostle's creed is to Christians--a compendium of their faith."[6] Thus, it is reasonable to assume that most of what Gene Clanton calls "the bible of the movement" had the support of at least a majority of Populists.[7] Given that, and in the absence of a better alternative for gauging

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And moving to the heart of the matter (2) What were the Populists supposed to do, decline to have one of their own elected until such time as it could be done without the aid of either of the other parties? That it was impossible for Allen to be elected outright by Populists, as Senator William Peffer had been in Kansas, is not justification, by itself, for questioning his commitment to the Populist reform agenda. See Argersinger, 199. On the progressive politics of Bryan, which had considerable overlap with Populist ideology, see Robert W. Cherny, A Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985) and Louis W. Koenig, Bryan: A Political Biography of William Jennings Bryan (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971).

[3] Robert C. McMath, Jr., American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 167.

[4] Ibid., 168. The exception to party harmony at the convention was the debate on woman suffrage.

[5] John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (1931; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 232.

[6] William A. Peffer, Populism, Its Rise and Fall, ed. Peter H. Argersinger, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 176.

[7] Gene Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 82.

Populist commitment, the Omaha Platform is the best (though not the only) yardstick for assessing a given individual's Populist bona fides.

Historian Peter Argersinger believed that if Allen was a Populist at all, he was no more than a "Silver Populist," that is to say, one who had little or no dedication to the principles of the Omaha Platform aside from its demand for unlimited silver coinage.[8] Because of his focus on and antipathy to Allen's party activities, Argersinger may have assumed that, as a silverite, Allen must have been a single-plank Populist with a monothematic agenda precluding any loyalty to what Argersinger calls "Omaha Populism": an adherence to the comprehensive whole of the principles and demands of the Omaha Platform in which silver was held to be a minor element.[9]

The picture looks quite different however, when we train our lens on the *legislative* arena, where Allen conducted most of his Populist-related activities. This chapter will examine Allen's Senate work during the regular sessions of the fifty-third

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[8] Argersinger, Populism and Politics, 252. For a fuller context of how Argersinger saw Silver Populists, and to whom among Populist leaders he thought the phrase applied, see ibid., pages 192-275 (chapters 7-8).

[9] For Argersinger's employment of the phrase "Omaha Populism," see ibid., 192, 223, 234, 270, 313-14. I will use "Silver" and "Omaha" Populism as ideological terms, and "fusionist" and "mid-roader" as strategic-political terms. Argersinger usually conflates these two classifications, with Silver/fusion and Omaha/mid-road Populists each constituting a coterminous pairing ("There remained of course some original Populists who continued to reject the demand for Silver Populism and its accompanying predilection for fusion.") 231. From this reductionist perspective, even if a fusionist can be shown to have supported most or the entire Omaha Platform, it would not follow that he or she was an Omaha Populist. However, I proceed on the view that party politics and policy politics are two sets of means, to each of which we may separately apply normative judgment in terms of the principles by which they are inspired and which they seek to advance. Although on occasion Argersinger does make the distinction I advocate here (The 1896 St. Louis Populist convention delegates "were well prepared to acknowledge silver and fusion as the only major goal and acceptable strategy of the party.") for him all exercises in fusion "subordinated principle to politics." It strikes me as conceivable that, at times, fusion might not have constituted such subordination, and that in some instances, strange as it may sound, anti-fusion might itself have been a betrayal of Populist principle. For "strategy" quotation see ibid., 264; for "subordinated" quotation see ibid., 265.

Congress, focusing particularly on how he responded to issues bearing on "Omaha Populism." It will explore whether a staunch silverite (as distinguished from "Silver Populist"), who had gained his position with the aid of Democrats, could also be an "Omaha" Populist.[10]

These first two regular Senate sessions in which Allen sat more or less coincided with the trough of the depression. By the end of 1893, 642 banks had failed, including sixty-nine national banks, and between April and December wages fell by more than nine percent.[11] For the year prior to July 1, 1894, roughly two-thirds of all railroad stock paid no dividends, and at the end of this period nearly 200 railroad companies were in receivership. In 1894, business investment continued to fall, overall economic activity dropped to roughly 20 percent under capacity, and the gross national product declined 3 percent.[12] Agriculture remained depressed. In the fall of 1894, to cite one indicator, the price of wheat was fifty cents a bushel, the lowest of the century.[13]

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[10] The dates of the second and third sessions were 4 Dec. 1893 to 28 Aug. 1894, and 3 Dec. 1894 to 2 Mar. 1895.

[11] Douglas Steeples and David O. Whitten, Democracy in Desperation: The Depression of 1893 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 34 (on the banks); and Charles Hoffman, The Depression of the Nineties: An Economic History (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970), 67 (on wages). Hoffman notes that during this period the hardship on workers was lessened "somewhat" due to a reduction in the cost of living.

[12] Hoffman, xxxii, 63, 276. R. Hal Williams, Years of Decision: American Politics in the 1890s (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 86. Nationally, wealth grew by 48 percent for the decade, in contrast to eighty percent during the 1880s. Hoffman, 11.

[13] Matthew Josephson, The Politicos: 1865-1896 (1938; reprint New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), 589. The price of farm products overall declined by 56 percent between 1869-1896. Hoffman, 30. In a sign of the times, Allen's home state had gained 600,000 residents in the 1880s; in the 1890s the increase was 3,600. Steeples and Whitten, 87.

Labor was hit hard too. In the winter of 1893-1894 unemployment rose to nearly 18 percent.[14] The approximately 1400 strikes in 1894 were the fifth highest yearly total theretofore. The number of both strikers (505,049) and strike-engendered job losses (660,425) were new highs in American history.[15] Historian Allen Nevins called the year beginning 1 July 1894 the United States' *annee terrible* of the period between 1877 and the First World War.[16]

Despite the worst economic slump in American history to that time, or perhaps because of it, Allen was optimistic concerning the political prospects of Populism, which were "very flattering indeed." He told a reporter that the People's Party would presently overtake the old parties, because Americans would soon understand that the paramount issue, which upon "scientific and just" resolution will eliminate ninety percent of "the evils afflicting society," is the money question, "its issuance and control, its use and abuse." The people will continue "to agitate" this issue, until it is eventually and fairly settled in the interests of everyone, rather than the small number of men and corporations that have long directed the activity of all branches of the government to their own ends, and who lack "the slightest concern for the welfare of the humble and poor." Populists insisted on improved "social conditions" for all ranks of society and the victorious

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[14] Hoffman, 109-10. Hoffman, recalling that repeal of the Sherman Silver Act had been sold as a sure generator of prosperity, notes, interestingly, that one of the "direct effects" of repeal was the loss of thousands of mining jobs, increasing the expanding "army of unemployed." Ibid., 111.

[15] Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion: 1890-1900 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 169.

[16] Allan Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1948), 649.

People's Party would eliminate all special advantages "incompatible with public safety and the general welfare."[17]

The most prominent financial debate of the regular session was the perennial question of the tariff. The Omaha Platform had charged the major parties with ignoring the nation's most important reform needs, and with seeking "to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff." Such artful dodging obscured the multiple means by which the privileged elite oppressed the people.[18]

Allen agreed. Relative to the pressing issues facing the country, the tariff was "a mere bauble" which for purposes of public manipulation was "the subject of repeated sham battles" between the mainstream parties.[19] Because its main political function was to distract the people from the most crucial issues, it was ceaselessly "thrown before the people...like a ball of yarn to a kitten, that it may jump at it from time to time to amuse itself."[20]

While Allen concurred with the Omaha Platform concerning the politics of the tariff, he was unable to ignore the issue for two interconnected reasons. First, although less important than the money question in every respect, to him the tariff was

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[17] "Senator Allen Speaks of the Outlook in Politics," Deseret News Bureau unidentified newspaper clipping, 12 Feb. 1894, Allen papers (hereafter AP), Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter NSHS).

[18] National Party Platforms: Volume 1 1840-1956, compiled by Donald Bruce Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 90.

[19] The first quote is from Congressional Record (hereafter CR), 53rd Cong., 3rd sess., 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 975; the second from "Senator Allen Speaks."

[20] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 975.

"important" because its tangible economic effects were considerable.[21] The platform itself acknowledged this, although in elliptical fashion, in a plank that stated that the nation's money should be retained "as much as possible in the hands of the people," and therefore demanded that all federal and state revenues be confined to the essential "expenses of the government, economically and honestly administered."[22] Second, because in 1892 the Democratic Party had made tariff reform one of its major campaign promises, in 1894 the tariff was the subject to which congress most devoted its attention.[23]

Philosophically, Allen was opposed to protectionism. As he saw it, other than the special and infrequent cases of temporary protection sanctionable under the constitution, tariffs were valid for revenue purposes only.[24] The protective tariff, Allen insisted, ought

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[21] "Senator Allen Speaks." Probably the tariff, about which farmers were, according to Harold Faulkner, "confused," was a more important phenomenon than many Populists realized or than most Populist historians have appreciated. See Faulkner, 56. As John Hicks observed, the rigged macroeconomics that had farmers buying in protected markets, and selling in open ones, had an "oppressive nature." This reality was fully understood by Southern farmers. Plank five of the Southern Alliance Platform formulated in 1890 at Ocala, Florida states: "Believing in the doctrine of equal rights to all and special privileges to none, we demand—a. That our national legislation shall be so framed in the future as not to build up one industry at the expense of another. [and] b. We further demand a removal of the existing heavy tariff tax from the necessities of life, that the poor of our land must have." Hicks, 80-81, 431. Thus, as a former Republican from the Midwest, Allen's work on the tariff bill ought rightfully to be viewed as prudently pragmatic. That Allen saw the tariff as economically significant is based on his various critical comments concerning the special-interest nature of most contemporary tariff lobbying and legislation.

[22] Johnson, 91.

[23] Faulkner, 157-161; Lawrence H. Chamberlain, The President, Congress and Legislation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 89-94.

[24] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, pp. 4865-67; pt. 6, p. 5920. Albert Shaw, "William V. Allen: A Populist. A Character Sketch and Interview," Review of Reviews 10 (July 1894): 39.

rightfully to be called the "prohibitive tariff," as its purpose was to prevent the natural functioning of the free market.[25]

In practice the tariff was a "legalized system of larceny."[26] Though lawful, it was an unconstitutional and confiscatory transfer of wealth in which a few are made very rich while the masses continue to suffer poverty.[27] On the Senate floor in May 1894, Allen explained the distasteful irony of the situation:

> It is a little bit singular that Senators who stand in this Chamber from day to day and denounce paternalism and put it all on the Populist party...will stand here and advocate the most notorious act of paternalism of which this country can be guilty. What is it but paternalism for a government by legal enactment to put its hand into the pocket of one citizen, like a pickpocket, take his money by force of law and put it in the pocket of another?[28]

Denouncing protection as "rapine and robbery," he accused its advocates of seeking to construct "colossal private fortunes ... at the expense" of farmers and "industrial interests." Of such paternalism the "wildest-eyed, the longest-haired Populist of the West never dreamed ... He believes in working honestly for his livelihood, living under honest laws with equal opportunities."[29]

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[25] William Vincent Allen, "The Prohibitive Tariff," unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d., AP.

[26] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4867.

[27] Ibid.; "Senator Allen Speaks." Allen was adamant about the unconstitutionality of preferentialism: "[T]he Constitution...marks out the line of taxation ... so plainly that almost a blind man can read it; but I believe the spirit of avarice which has existed in this country so long ... and is manifested here [in the Senate] daily, has overridden the plain language of the Constitution ... and so far as it has any practical effect upon this question it is a mere rope of sand ... because men who desire to make money out of their brother men unlawfully have overridden the Constitution in this Chamber and in the other end of the Capitol." Pt. 6, p. 5466. See also pt. 5, pp. 4862-66. On Populists' devotion to the Constitution, see chapter two above.

[28] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4867.

[29] Ibid. See also 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, pp. 975, 981.

Allen seemingly did the best he could with the tariff legislation (the Wilson-Gorman Bill), which was the focus of Senate debate for five months.[30] He endeavored to have the duties removed on various items important to westerners, particularly those basic to shelter and energy such as coal, lumber, and other building materials.[31] He argued against favored treatment of luxury items.[32] He crafted an amendment aimed at eliminating proposed features of the sugar schedules beneficial to the "sugar trust."[33] In accordance with a resolution approved by the 1892 Omaha Convention, he voiced opposition to federal corporate bounty subsidies.[34] Allen charged the Senate with failing to solicit the opinions of labor organizations concerning tariff reform.[35] He pointed to the tariff as a principal cause of the wage reductions leading to the current violence on the part of coal miners in Pennsylvania.[36] He submitted what Senator William Peffer (Populist, Kansas) called a "very important" resolution, directing the Treasury department to provide data to the Senate showing the number of workers whose wages were or would be affected by the tariff, and whether under the tariff alien workers were

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[30] Faulkner, 158.

[31] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 6, pp. 5213-19, 5463-65, 5468-69, 5501-04, 5472-73; pt. 7, p. 6454-57, 6562-65, 7111-15, 7125-26.

[32] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, pp. 6523-27, 7124.

[33] Ibid., 7070-71.

[34] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 3, pp. 2763-64, 2771-72. The resolution stated "[t]hat we oppose any subsidy or national aid to any private corporation for any purpose." Hicks, 444.

[35] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 3, p. 2506.

[36] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6454.

displacing United States citizens in protected industries.[37] Returning to a Populist concern he had addressed during the special session, and which now informed his critique of President Cleveland's bond-issuing policies (see below), Allen offered an amendment to the tariff bill requiring that all surplus revenue collected under the new legislation be administered as a "sacred trust fund" to finance payments covering the national debt "as rapidly as it matures."[38]

The tariff debate included one other notable aspect, one of immense interest to Populists. The Wilson-Gorman Act included the first national income tax provision (two percent annually on incomes above four thousand dollars) to be enacted since the 1872 repeal of the Civil War income tax. The Omaha Platform had explicitly called for a graduated income tax.[39]

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[37] Ibid., pp. 6147, 6496-97, 6802-03, 6863-64; pt. 5, p. 4797, 4798 (for the Peffer quotation), 4799; pt. 6, pp. 5374-77, 5398, 5403-06. Peffer told his Senate colleagues that "The people are very much interested in acquiring this particular class of information." (4798)

[38] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 7012-13. See also ibid., 6716. In his concern about federal debt Allen was probably influenced, or at least emboldened, by the National (Northern or Northwestern) Farmers' Alliance. The third plank of its 1889 platform reads, in part: "We favor the payment of the public debt as rapidly as possible." Fred A Shannon, American Farmers' Movements (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1957), 148. Allen voted for the final Wilson-Gorman bill, which reduced duties from an average 49.5 percent to 41 percent, because he saw it as an improvement over the McKinley Tariff Act of 1890. The bill was not as "radical" a reform of the tariff as Allen wanted, but he remarked that it would provide some financial relief to the poor while shifting a larger share of the tax burden onto the under-taxed wealthy. See p. 7134; unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d. (15 Sept. 1895 dateline), AP; Donald R. Matthews, Yeas and Nays: Normal Decision-Making in the U.S. House of Representatives (New York: Wiley, 1975), 114. For more of Allen's work on the tariff, see CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 3, p. 2507-08; pt. 4, 3410, 3611; pt. 6, pp. 5764-65, 5873-5876, 5911-12, 5915-19; pt. 7, 6053, 7052-56, 7127-28.

[39] Matthews, 114; John F. Witte, "Taxation," The Encyclopedia of the United States Congress, vol.4, ed. Donald C. Bacon, Roger H. Davidson and Morton Keller (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 1925. Johnson, 91.

In the Senate Allen and his Populist colleague James H. Kyle (South Dakota) were the leading advocates for approval of the new tax.[40] Although Allen did not attempt to explain how the tax would rectify the problem, he emphasized what he saw as the unjust and contrived imbalance in wealth among the nation's people, implying that the income tax would partially correct the disparity. In a long speech on the income tax amendment, Allen argued that the Government had a duty to promote equal opportunity and insisted that it would be unacceptable for it not to try to change the circumstances responsible for allowing--as he said was the case--twenty percent of the nation's population to possess eighty percent of its wealth. Allen cited statistics on wealth concentration from several sources, including one from a scholarly journal showing that nine percent of American families owned nearly three-quarters of the country's wealth.[41] This could not be attributed to "improvidence" of the people on one hand, or the talent of a few in the business world on the other, but to "vicious legislation" favoring a privileged few.[42] Before long, he suggested, "a very few thousand men" would own all of the wealth, while the common people would "become a vast agricultural and mining peasantry, practically slaves."[43]

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[40] Witte, 1925; Gene Clanton, Congressional Populism and the Crisis of the 1890s (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 76-78.

[41] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, pp. 6714, 6716. The journal article, written by an official of the Census Bureau, was from the Dec. 1893 issue of The Political Science Quarterly. According to Steeples and Whitten (20), in 1890 in the United States (population 63 million), two hundred thousand citizens "controlled" seventy percent of the nation's wealth.

[42] Ibid., 6716.

[43] Ibid., 6714.

An income tax, Allen thought, would increase the level of fairness in the tax system overall. He asserted that many well-off people sought to avoid paying their fair share of taxes, and that the laws were written so that the higher one's income, the more it was shielded from taxation. Responsibility for funding the government increasingly and disproportionately fell to the nation's poorer citizens.[44] Responding to a Senator's complaint that the income tax constituted a prosperity tax, Allen wondered: If the tax burden were not placed "ratably upon the prosperous, in God's name where would you rest it?" To put it on the poor, he suggested, was not the proper answer.[45]

Allen was careful to explain that he did not begrudge the wealthy their fortunes so long as they were honestly and honorably acquired, but he insisted that what was being asked of them was perfectly reasonable. During his long income tax speech Allen presented a recent list published in the New York World showing the calculated tax bills for dozens of New York millionaires under the proposed amendment, revealing, for example, that the obligation of the top income-earner on the list (William W. Astor) would be $178,000 on an annual income of $8,900,000.[46] In accordance with his party, Allen would have had the tax be progressive, for he maintained that a man ought to support the government in proportion to his ability to pay.[47] Thus, when Senator Peffer

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[44] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 971.

[45] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, pp. 6715.

[46] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, pp. 6703, 6706, 6711-12. Allen, observing the presence on the list of two "preachers of the gospel" with $250,000 annual incomes, commented: "They are preaching the gospel of Christ; they are preaching the doctrine of peace on earth and good will to men, and yet they enjoy princely fortunes. Should they not pay an income tax?" (6714)

[47] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 971; Shaw, 40. It is instructive, by way of assessing Allen's political ideology, to note that the graduated income tax had been one of the demands of the Greenback

introduced an amendment to make the income tax graduated, Allen voted for it, one of only five senators to do so.[48]

At bottom, the income tax debate was for Allen a Manichean struggle pitting the forces of fairness and opportunity against those of covetousness and unpatriotic special privilege. Concerning the assortment of objections to the income tax put forth by its opponents in the Senate, Allen averred that it is "the argument of avarice...of cupidity ... of the man who loves his lucre more than he loves his country," who desires to throw the burden of financing the government "upon the poor and distressed and those least able to bear it."[49] Reflecting on the comments made by some that the implementation of an income tax would induce a good many people to leave the country, Allen told the Senate that to any American citizen whose sense of patriotism is so slight that he would rather depart than shoulder his fair share of taxes, "I say, may his flight from the United States be speedy and his stay be perpetual." He continued: "We do not need men of that kind in this country. We do not want them here. They are a curse to this country, and the sooner they leave and the longer they stay [away] the better off we shall be."[50]

Party. See Elmer Ellis, "Public Opinion and the Income Tax, 1860-1900" in Historical Vistas: Readings in United States History vol. 2: 1865 to the Present, eds. Robert Wiebe and Grady McWhiney (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1964), 121, reprinted from Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 37 (1940), 225-42.

[48] Clarence Nelson Roberts, "A Congressional History of the Populists," (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri, 1936), 95-96; Clanton, Congressional Populism, 77. In addition to Allen and Peffer, the other supporting votes came from Kyle and Republicans Henry Teller (Colorado) and Watson Squire (Washington).

[49] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6716.

[50] Ibid., 6709.

Allen argued for a different perspective on taxes. Embracing a level of civicism that probably stunned many of his Senate colleagues, he reflected that "Taxation is spoken of in this chamber as a burden. It is spoken of in our law books as a burden. But it occurs to me that every patriotic citizen ought to look upon it as a privilege to pay his just proportion" of state and federal taxes, one that "every...citizen ought to rejoice that he enjoys." A civil government lacking the power of taxation is unimaginable, he concluded, "and without the application of this sovereign power from time to time to maintain our Government it could not exist."[51]

The Omaha Platform contained four specific financial demands in addition to revenue restraint and the income tax. These were a government-issued national currency with a "just" and "equitable" means of distributing it that did not involve banking corporations, free silver at a 16:1 ratio, an increase in the available money supply to fifty dollars per capita, and the creation by the government of postal savings banks.[52]

That Allen was committed to the first three of these had been clearly evident during the special session, and he continued now to advocate the Populist position on each. He called emphatically for phasing out the money-issuing power of the national banks, whose usurpation of a fundamental public function was inimical both to the

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[51] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 971. For Allen's defense of the constitutionality of the income tax, see 971-72; 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, pp. 6707, 6709. For his charge that the "money power," through its machinations aimed at defeating the income tax, were poised to gain control of the Supreme Court (the sole department of the Federal Government "left to the people"), see pp. 6707-09. For a brief and interesting account of the national debate over, and legislative and judicial disposition of, the income tax during the 1890s see Ellis, 125-32.

[52] Johnson, 91.

freedom of the people and the "perpetuity of republican government."[53] He submitted a variety of pro-silver resolutions, as well as a bill to rescind all laws concerning the coinage of silver enacted since 1 January 1873 and to reenact all laws pertaining to silver in effect at the end of 1872.[54] He arraigned the "pernicious" policy of monetary contraction, submitted at least one bill for the specific purpose of expanding the money supply, and contended that through prudent management based on population and macroeconomic data, the money supply could be periodically adjusted to make the currency of nearly equal value at all times.[55]

But what type of money should the government issue? As in the special session, Allen's statements on the matter could be taken as inconsistent. Government-issued paper currency, he asserted in a July 1894 interview, ought to be backed by and redeemable for gold and silver. He would not begin "with fiat money, as you people in New York call it. The Western men do not want a period of wild inflation either now or in the future."[56]

Six months later, on the other hand, he argued for silver coinage, "*supplemented by* a sufficient volume of sound paper currency of full legal tender power issued directly

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[53] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974 (for the quotation), 975-76, 978, 1564; Shaw, 38.

[54] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 2, p. 1925; pt. 3, pp. 2337-38, 2775-76, 2838, 2904; pt. 8, 7982, 8144, 8212, 8219-20, 8367; 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, 974, 1407; Shaw, 38-39.

[55] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6774 (for quote); pt. 1, p. 519; 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974; Shaw, 39. The policy of contraction, Allen claimed, had to some degree "paralyzed" Nebraska industries. Ibid., 6774.

[56] Shaw, 39.

by the Government."[57] He went on: "Let us retain the greenback and the different forms" of government-issued paper currency. The People's Party "stands for honest money—the money of the Constitution."[58]

Despite his vehement rejection of intrinsic value in money and his periodic support for fiat currency (see Chapter Two above), on the whole Allen's rhetoric evidences no great enthusiasm for fiat money. Regarding this, two guesses seem reasonable. First, doubtless aware that achieving a fiat standard was politically hopeless, Allen pragmatically opted to champion silver as a remedy for the evils brought on by contraction and deflation. As Gretchen Ritter writes, financial conservatives had won their struggle with the proponents of greenbackism--with its fiat-money philosophy--in 1879. As in the case of some fiat-money Populists, various aspects of greenbackism still had their advocates. But in the years after finance became controversial again in 1886, most financial reformers sought to further bimetallism, and the public "generally accepted the need for a bullion-based monetary standard."[59]

Second, having passionately argued during the special session against the intellectual underpinnings of bullionism, but apparently never having even attempted any substantial criticisms of fiat currency, Allen was probably favorably inclined toward fiat money and would have promoted it if he thought that doing so could accomplish anything. Rightly or not, Allen felt eager, perhaps even desperate, to get more money

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[57] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974. (italics mine)

[58] Ibid., 976.

[59] Gretchen Ritter, Goldbugs and Greenbacks: The Antimonopoly Tradition and the Politics of Finance in America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 37-38, 113, 158 (for quotation), 160.

circulating in the economy.[60] His position was no different than that of Senator Peffer, who explained: "Populists demand gold, silver and paper money, all equally full legal tender ... It is evident that we must have more money."[61]

During the special session Allen had also taken the Populist position concerning the government's bond issues. His later response to this issue merits some detailed observation because it was something of a confluence of the national bank, silver coinage and currency volume issues, and because it was as large a concern to Allen in 1894 as the silver issue had been to him the year before. In its preamble, the Omaha Platform had

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[60] Several historians insist that true Populists demonstrate an unyielding fidelity to fiatism. But given Allen's emphasis on the need for an elastic and publicly controlled currency, it is difficult to see how the difference between his position and that demanding currency-inconvertibility could disqualify Allen as a genuine Populist.

It must also be noted here that nowhere does the Omaha Platform demand a fiat currency, although it proposes a plan to create it in the form of the subtreasury. Like most northern farmers, Allen (who was himself a part-time farmer) opposed it, for reasons that are as yet unknown. Perhaps he would have agreed with the Kansas suballiance president who saw the proposal as a breach of the Alliance motto "Equal rights to all and special privileges to none." Maybe he noticed the disturbing similarities between it and the national bank system. Or perhaps his reaction was similar to that of fellow Nebraskan and Alliance member Jay Burrows, who, according to Jeffrey Ostler, considered a program that would expand and contract the money supply by more than a billion dollars twice annually to be "too hair-brained for even patient criticism." Whatever the case, Allen's opposition to an idea that the Omaha Platform did not insist on, that had as its object the establishment of a form of currency that the platform never explicitly demanded, and that had relatively little support among Populists after 1892, lends no support to the charge that Allen was not a true Populist. CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 971; Jeffrey Ostler, Prairie Populism: The Fate of Agrarian Radicalism in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa, 1880-1892 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 103 (for Burrows quotation), 105 (for "Equal rights" quotation); Hicks, 190-91, 200-204; Johnson, 91; Shaw, 36. A fascinating account of the contemporary arguments for and reaction to the subtreasury proposal is in Hicks, 186-204. On the non-radical character of the subtreasury plan, see Norman Pollack, The Just Polity: Populism, Law, and Human Welfare (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 219-26.

On a related note, Allen incorrectly assured the Senate that no Populist had ever advocated the subtreasury in Congress. It is true that on the whole, Populist congressmen showed little enthusiasm for the scheme, but Congressman John Davis (Kansas) had supported it, Tom Watson (Georgia) had introduced legislation in the House, and Senator Peffer backed it, although in 1895 he proposed an alternative in the form of a public banking system. CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, pp. 974, 978, 980; Roberts, 122-24; Argersinger, Populism and Politics, 26, 193-94, 225; C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel (1938; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 203-05.

[61] From the North American Review, quoted in "The Mission of the Populist Party," The Review of Reviews, Jan. 1894, 76.

charged that the federal government's power to issue money "is appropriated to enrich bond-holders; a vast public debt payable in legal tender currency has been funded into gold-bearing bonds, thereby adding millions to the burdens of the people."[62] In order to relieve the public of the interest burden occasioned by bond issues, it was necessary to reclaim public control of monetary policy.

Allen was the embodiment of Populist anti-bond sentiment. He saw the government's bond issues as part of an unfolding conspiracy formed by European and American financial elites thirty years earlier, the purpose of which, he told the Senate, was to "enslave the laboring and industrial classes of the world," and establish "a golden shrine at which all must worship." Much of the conspirators' aims had been achieved through the demonetization of silver by way of the various post-war silver laws. These, Allen lamented, "stabbed the legitimate industries of the honest masses to the vitals. Each blow brought sweat and toil from the poor."[63] Aided by their allies and hirelings, the conspirators were "ever vigilant and active in the prosecution of their nefarious and infamous scheme to centralize capital, make high-priced money and low-priced products and labor."[64] The failure of the Treasury department to meet the silver-coinage requirements set by law and the initiation of bond-issues by Secretary of the Treasury John G. Carlisle constituted the latest and decisive blow against the power of Congress to control the issuance of money and to maintain a significant currency role for silver. So

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[62] Johnson, 90.

[63] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 2, p. 1379.

[64] Ibid., 1379-80. See also pt. 1, pp. 566, 751-52.

the *fait* had become *accompli*: "silver was stricken down, and the foul conspiracy in each scene of the criminal drama was marvelously successful ... The people have fallen."[65]

How to account for the rise and power of such "damnable" intrigue? Allen saw it thusly:

> Since the time when the gentle voice of the lowly Nazarene was heard preaching mercy and justice on the lonely shores of Galilee, man's selfishness has been so strong that he has been willing to enslave and rob his brother. Slavery has existed throughout all ages, and exists today.

The conspirators, were "[a]ctuated by such a base and sordid motive," and in working to realize their designs had sought and, Allen strongly hinted, succeeded in acquiring the influence necessary to have their way in Congress.[66]

He saw their footprints in the executive branch as well, and he endeavored to undo some of the damage they had caused there. Allen forcefully argued that Secretary Carlisle's bond issues had no sanction in law and sought to get the Senate on record as agreeing with him.[67] In January 1894, he served on the legal team representing the Knights of Labor in their suit against Carlisle seeking an injunction to prevent him from issuing $50,000,000 worth of bonds redeemable in gold coin.[68] Citing the public's right

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[65] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 2, p. 1380.

[66] Ibid. On Populist conspiratorial thought see Jeffrey Ostler, "The Rhetoric of Conspiracy and the Formation of Kansas Populism," Agricultural History 69 (1995): 1-27.

[67] Ibid., 1375-78, 1679-81; pt. 1, pp. 973-74; pt. 4, pp. 3463, 3539; pt. 7, p. 6773; Shaw, 37. Allen's main line of argument concerned what he interpreted to be Carlisle's misreading of the Resumption Act of 1875.

[68] "To Avoid a Bond Issue," Chicago Times, 30 Jan. 1894, newspaper clipping, AP; Alexander Dana Noyes, Thirty Years of American Finance: A Short Financial History of the Government and People of the United States Since the Civil War, 1865-1896 (1900; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1969), 210-12. The injunction request, which was denied, was heard on January 29, in federal district court in Washington, D.C.

to know to whom it is indebted, he strongly urged the passage of a resolution submitted by Peffer directing the Secretary of the Treasury to announce the names of bidders and purchasers of government securities.[69]

He even denounced the immediate justification for conducting bond sales in the first place. Rejecting the sacrosanctity with which corporate liberals held the $100,000,000 gold reserve, Allen argued that, like the Treasury Secretary's supposed bond-issuing authority, the reserve fund had no legal basis. All the funds in the reserve could be spent, Allen claimed, without breaking any laws or contracts. The reserve fund, he colorfully explained,

> [i]s one of the instruments used in a gigantic system of buncoing the people. It is used as the occasion and pretext for the unnecessary issuance and sale from time to time of Government bonds, with which to stop the clamoring of Lombard and Wall street sharks, as the dismal bark of Cerberus, the triple-mouthed dog that stood guard at the gate of Hades, was stopped by being fed with victims destined for the weird and waste land of Pluto.[70]

The worst aspect of the people's victimization was that while the reserve fund provided the opportunity for large investors "to invade and loot" the Treasury, the bond sales that propped up the fund saddled the people with burdensome interest payments.[71] Through a perpetual public debt, the "idle money classes" would make themselves "pensioners upon the people."[72] Moreover, the naturally intimate link that existed

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[69] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 2, pp. 1801-02; pt. 3, p. 2024.

[70] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 2, p. 1379. See also ibid., 1682, 1761.

[71] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6716. See also ibid., 1379, 1682-83; 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 3, 2481.

[72] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 1564. See also pp. 1563, 1565.

between bond-holders and the government insured that the former exercised a corrupting influence over the latter, as in the case of the government's implementation of deflationary policies that were good for creditors but damaging to commodities producers.[73] And, as if all this were not enough, the debt would make "bond slaves" of future generations.[74]

Debt, then, was the bete noire. It was to be assiduously avoided both in personal finance and in government, where its incurrence was injurious to the commonweal.[75] While many leaders of the old parties had become "bond crazy," it was, Allen observed, "a part of the Populist faith," that a government, "like a prudent husbandman, must be without debt."[76]

The evidence at hand for the fifty-third Congress is only suggestive concerning Allen's position on the final financial plank, which called for the establishment of government-run postal savings banks to furnish secure and accessible banking services to farmers in outlying areas.[77] Nevertheless, that Allen supported the idea was made

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[73] Shaw, 40.

[74] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 1564.

[75] Shaw, 40; "Tinged with Populism," The Butte Miner, 3 Sep. 1895, AP.

[76] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 3, p. 2481 (for the first quote); pt. 2, p. 981 (for subsequent quotes). For high praise of Allen's performance in debate with Senator John Sherman (on bond issues) from a Populist newspaper see "Senator Allen's Future," [Washington, D.C.] National Watchman, excerpt from unidentified newspaper clipping, AP.

[77] Johnson, 91. The indirect evidence: In a long Senate speech on Populism given in January 1895, Allen, responding to a colleague's question about the subtreasury plan, avowed that the subtreasury proposal "is the only defect in the Omaha platform." CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 978. Information on Populism and the postal savings plan is hard to come by. The general histories of the movement have almost nothing to say about it. For a brief introduction to the plan, which during the 1890s went nowhere, see Ritter, 177, 194-96. For an interesting account of the idea's revival during the Taft administration, see

evident in his speech to a Populist audience in Boston in 1896 when he listed postal savings banks among the "cardinal principles" of the People's Party.[78] In 1900, he offered a bill to institute postal savings "departments," to promote personal savings, to provide the people a "safe and reliable place to deposit their idle funds, and to put into actual use the money of the country."[79] Given his distrust of private bankers and his solicitude for the needs of farmers and small producers, it is probably safe to assume that he had supported the postal savings plan since at least 1892, when it was adopted as a platform plank at the Populist national convention.

The Omaha Platform presented a triparted reform program, of which "Finance" was the first category and "Transportation" the second. The latter consisted of two demands: first, that the government own and operate the railroads "in the interest of the people," and second, that it do likewise with the telephone and telegraph systems.[80]

Here Allen began cautiously. When asked about government ownership of railroads in a magazine interview published in July 1894, he expressed some doubt as to its feasibility in the United States. "I am not very sanguine, nor especially eager for any large venture into the field of governmental railroading." Were it to be attempted, Allen recommended it be entered into carefully and gradually. He suggested the possibility of the government assuming control of one of the Pacific railroads as an experimental study

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Elizabeth Sanders, Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 232-36.

[78] "The Cause of Labor: Senator W.V. Allen's Great Speech in Boston," Journal of the Knights of Labor, 4 June 1896, p. 1, col. 2, AP.

[79] CR, 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 1, p. 667.

[80] Johnson, 91.

of how government operation of the roads might work and to gain information with which to assess the merits of such governmental stewardship. Allen felt more certainty about the disposition of the telegraph system, which he would have the government come to own and operate through a gradual transition. He had no doubt as to the government's legal right to acquire the railroads or the telegraph, should it deem it necessary to do so to protect the common interest and provided that the displaced owners were given due compensation.[81]

Allen's views on the nationalization of the railroads evolved rather quickly from moderate to radical. A few weeks after the aforementioned interview was conducted, Allen argued in the Senate that the depression of crop prices in the West was largely due to exorbitant freight rates and the "root of the matter...the monopoly of transportation."[82] In the same month in which the interview appeared, Allen introduced a resolution for the formation of a tripartisan Senate committee to examine the question of the "necessity and authority for" public ownership of the railroad, telephone, and telegraph systems.[83] Six months later, conveying that Populists condemned pooling, stock watering, and price discrimination by railroads (and telegraph and telephone companies), he announced that "If I had it in my power I should reduce every railroad company in this country to absolute Government ownership."[84] The following summer (September 1895) he

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[81] Shaw, 40-41.

[82] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 6, pp. 5913 (for quotation), 5917.

[83] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 7156.

[84] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974, 979 (for quotation). In February 1895, during a discussion of whether the government ought to purchase some rail cars for the postal service, Allen

reaffirmed this position, saying that the people's continued freedom required the nationalization of the huge wire communication and railway companies.[85]

The third category of the Populist reform triad was "Land." The land section of the Omaha Platform called for an end to monopolistic land holdings and the forbiddance of alien land ownership. The land, "including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of the people." All land possessed by corporations "in excess of their actual needs ... should be reclaimed by the government and held for actual settlers only."[86]

In remarks to the Senate in June 1894, Allen denounced the major political parties for having given away huge tracts of the best land in the country to railroads and other corporations. He called for legislation forbidding the government to donate public land to any corporation, and argued that he would have "every acre of the public domain held sacred for actual settlement by actual settlers."[87]

In assessing Allen's Populism it will be helpful to look at several subjects touched on in the preamble to the Omaha Platform, but not explicitly addressed in the platform proper. We have seen that Allen championed the rights of labor during the special session, and he continued to do so.

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suggested that the idea was a positive step forward. The day was quickly coming, he said, when the government must not only assume management of postal cars, but also "absolute ownership" of the cars, "as well as of the engine that draws them and the track upon which they run." (pt.3, pp. 2022-23)

[85] "Tinged with Populism," The Butte Miner, 3 Sep. 1895, AP.

[86] Johnson, 91.

[87] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, pp. 6713, 6714 (for quotation). On a related subject, the question of what the rights of debtors ought to be concerning mortgages and trust deeds in the District of Columbia, Allen charged that the current form of handling trust deeds was a "cutthroat" and "iniquitous" system that oppressed the poor and served the interests of "money sharks." In considering how the system should be

The crux of the labor problem was an exploitative economic system. Pointing to the high incidence of men moving from country to city in search of opportunity but finding themselves unable to escape poverty, Allen contested the view that such migrants were lazy or lacked intelligence. Rather, their plight was the result of legislation allowing the capitalist to have not only that part of the wealth that was rightfully his, but also the just share of the worker who produced it.[88] Such legislation flowed from a Congress which, consciously or not, was controlled by "baneful influences" which rendered impossible the passage of financial legislation that would create an inclusive prosperity. While it was possible for government to provide relief for labor through public works projects, government's chief duty was to influence industrial conditions so as to make remedial public employment unnecessary.[89]

Ohio Populist Jacob Coxey was evidently convinced that the government was not going to fulfill this duty. In late March, he set out with his "industrial army" of unemployed men on a peaceful march to Washington to petition the Congress for the establishment of government-subsidized public works employment programs. According to historian Carlos Schwantes, "Populists, who seemed congenitally disposed to aid the underdog, overwhelmingly supported" the Coxey campaign, "although some would have preferred to see the men remain at home and 'march on the ballot box' instead." While the lowly marchers also elicited sympathy or support from a significant portion of the

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reformed, he took his cue from the "very humane homestead laws of the different States." Pt. 4, pp. 3080-83, 3089-93, 3166-71 (quotations on 3082, 3090).

[88] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 973.

[89] Shaw, 38.

public, the reaction of most senators was closer to that of the many mainstream newspaper editorial writers who felt little but contempt for Coxey and the agenda of his "Commonweal of Christ" organization. Not surprisingly, Senate Populists were among Coxey's few supporters on Capitol Hill.[90]

In his history of the industrial army phenomenon of 1894, Populist journalist Henry Vincent wrote that, regarding their desire to ensure that in Washington Coxey's free speech rights would be protected, "the friends of the Commonweal in the Senate are in earnest." Early in the Senate's consideration of the Coxey matter, Vincent noted Allen's active support of Coxey's constitutional rights and wrote approvingly that Allen was both resolute "in his convictions" and not readily thwarted by obstacles. Vincent's account stops a few days prior to the Commonwealers' arrival in Washington.[91] Had he covered the remainder of the drama, Vincent may very well have related that Allen worked as hard as anybody in Congress on Coxey's behalf.[92]

Readers of Allen's initial comments on Coxey would have been surprised. In late March, as Coxey's band was beginning its journey, Allen sounded more like an irritated

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[90] Donald L. McMurry, Coxey's Army: A Study of the Industrial Army Movement of 1894 (1929; reprint, New York: AMS Press, Inc. 1970), 21-126; H.W. Brands, The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890s (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 160-76; Henry Vincent, The Story of the Commonweal (1894; reprint, New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), 233-42; Josephson, 559-66; Carlos A. Schwantes, Coxey's Army: An American Odyssey (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 53, 56 (for quotation). Coxey was a self-made and moderately wealthy businessman, Greenbacker, and fiat-money advocate. The Commonweal was co-founded by Carl Browne, who converted Coxey to Theosophy.

[91] Vincent, 224-28 (quotations on 228). "Without question," Lawrence Goodwyn writes, "Henry Vincent has been the most overlooked and underrated warrior of the agrarian revolt." See Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 411.

[92] McMurry, 104-126; Clanton, Congressional Populism, 69-72.

conservative than a Populist. Coxeyism, he declaimed, is "absurd and useless. It is the work of a man who, if not a knave, is crazy," and who is certainly not a Populist. Although one of Coxey's core concerns, improving the nation's roads, was "a fit subject for agitation," Allen doubted that the government had the right to allocate funds for that purpose.[93]

A mass protest such as this, he went on, "attracts to itself the worst elements, who are glad of a chance to pillage with the audacity that comes to a large mob." He predicted the marchers would either give up before reaching Washington or that state authorities would "take proper measures" to stop them. As Congress was still accepting petitions in the usual manner (through the mail), he concluded that the march was a "hostile ... foolish, idiotic attempt to coerce congress."[94]

Three weeks later, however, it was evident that he was beginning to view the situation very differently. On April 19, Allen spoke in support of a resolution by Peffer denouncing the prospect of using force against Coxey's army and calling for the formation of a senatorial reception committee. Why, Allen asked, did the approach of unemployed petitioners, "every one of whom perhaps is as good as any Senator in this chamber," call for military preparations while paid lobbyists, who caused more damage

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[93] "A Very Poor Brand," unidentified newspaper clipping, dateline 28 Mar. 1894, AP.

[94] Ibid. How to explain this early hostility to Coxey? Perhaps Allen shared the unfortunate but common tendency to indiscriminately equate peaceful physical protest with anarchy. Moreover, as Matthew Josephson wrote in his account of the Coxey affair, Coxey's methods were "novel." See Josephson, 564. Allen seemed to be baffled as to why, given their right to petition (in the standard way), people would choose to march on Washington. Aware that Coxey's bills had already been received by Congress, he probably thought "the petition in boots" superfluous. Finally, as we will see, Allen detested lobbyists. It appears that, at least initially, Allen viewed the Commonwealers as he did corporate lobbyists, as people attempting to circumvent the normal republican parliamentary process. See Shaw, 37.

than all the industrial armies, were greeted warmly as a matter of course?[95] On April 19, he defended the right of the marchers to petition Congress in person:

> When railroad lobbyists, tax lobbyists, bank lobbyists, and all the other lobbyists who infest this city and these Capitol grounds come here everything is thrown open to them from cellar to dome; there is no restriction upon them; but when Mr. Coxey comes marching along with his army of the commonweal to petition Congress for the redress and relief of the masses ... he is to be met and not permitted to enter the Capitol grounds, to say nothing of this sacred Senate chamber.[96]

The New York Times denounced Allen's "violent propositions," which it claimed were bound to "warm ... the heart of every ragamuffin in Coxey's outfit."[97] Senator Joseph Hawley (Republican, Connecticut) told the Senate that Allen's statements "would have been received with tumultuous applause in a meeting of anarchists. It had in it, not requiring a microscope, but visible to the naked eye, the bacteria and bacilli of anarchy."[98]

On April 25, in response to the military and police buildup initiated by federal and municipal authorities and to a proclamation of the commissioners of the District of Columbia urging Coxey's men not to enter the city, Allen submitted a resolution expressing support for the commonwealers' rights to petition, free speech, peaceable assembly, and to enter any part of the Capitol or its grounds normally open to the

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[95] McMurry, 107, 108 (for quote). Allen's generally negative comments about the Coxeyites in an interview in the July issue of The Review of Reviews are not a repudiation of his support of Coxey during the spring. References to events in the interview indicate that it was conducted in April, after Peffer's resolution but before Allen had presented any of his own. See Shaw, 41.

[96] Quoted in Clanton, Congressional Populism, 70.

[97] "No Welcome for Coxey Men," The New York Times, 20 Apr. 1894, p. 6.

[98] Quoted in Clanton, Congressional Populism, 70.

public.[99] Later in the day, at a meeting of the Populist congressional caucus, the resolution was ratified as the Populist position on the movement.[100]

Excepting its half-dozen supporters, the resolution was greeted in the Senate with responses ranging from cool to hostile. Senator Edward Wolcott (Republican, Colorado) doubtless spoke for many of his colleagues. He advised that it was time for public officials to "pander less to that miscalled portion of the labor vote whose labor is with their throats and never with their hands," time, he continued, to stand for "the rights of American manhood, the right of a man to work if he wants to even if it takes the whole Army of the country to sustain him in doing it," time, "we had the courage to stand together against socialism and populism and paternalism run amok."[101]

Allen argued that the Commonwealers had just as much right to enter Washington on foot and be left alone as did the many other groups that regularly came from outside the district to lobby Congress, and that the unemployed men could not afford train fare ought to be considered irrelevant. He still saw the movement as "visionary and not likely to be fruitful of any good result," but insisted that the marchers

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[99] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4060. For the text of the proclamation of the D.C. Commissioners, see Vincent, 102-03.

[100] McMurry, 110. In addition to Allen, the participants were Senator William Stewart of Nevada, People's Party National Committee Chairman Henry Taubeneck of Illinois, and Representatives Lafayette Pence and John Bell of Colorado, William Baker and William Harris of Kansas, Omer Kem and William McKeighan of Nebraska and Haldor Boen of Minnesota. Peffer and Kyle were evidently not present, though both voted with Allen on the resolution. CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4111.

[101] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4107. Celebrating the suppression of Allen's resolution in the Senate, The New York Times called Allen and Peffer "Communists" and "representatives of Anarchists." Untitled editorial, 26 Apr. 1894, p. 4.

had a "perfect right" to come to Washington.[102] The public ought to understand, Allen concluded, "though they have been misled in this respect, that every citizen in this land, white or black, high or low, rich or poor, stands under the protection of the American flag in this city as in any other portion of the land, absolutely sacred."[103]

In an April 29 newspaper column, Allen confessed that he had not studied Coxey or his movement until less than two weeks previously, and now believed the Commonweal leader to be "intelligent, honest, and thrifty," and his followers "mechanics and laborers of more than ordinary intelligence; sober, honest, law abiding and industrious." Having been a "common laborer" in his youth, Allen thought it "natural that I should sympathize with the laboring classes," the members of which, he asserted, were more intelligent than was usually acknowledged. Their only alternative for economic relief "is a united effort on Congress such as will force that slow and over conservative body to act."[104]

Contradicting his skeptical statement of just four days earlier concerning the movement's potential to effect positive change, Allen predicted that the movement would bring forth results that could not be realized in ten years by the usual methods of agitation. The country was "most hopelessly in the grasp of the money power," Allen wrote, and "[h]eroic efforts" were necessary to change the situation.[105]

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[102] Ibid., 4106-08, 4109 (for quotation), 4110.

[103] Ibid., 4111.

[104] "A Plea for Coxey," New York Morning Journal, 29 Apr. 1894, AP.

[105] Ibid. On May 9 in the Senate, Allen declared that regarding the substance of the proposals Coxey had sent to Congress "I have not and never have had the slightest sympathy." CR, 53-2, 1894, vol.

After Coxey's legionnaires arrived in Washington, Allen and Peffer visited their camp to wish them well.[106] Allen and Senator Stewart were eyewitnesses when Coxey and two of his lieutenants were arrested on the grounds of the Capitol for carrying banners and walking on the grass.[107] When Coxey was arraigned in police court, Allen assisted the defendants' legal team and addressed the court "at considerable length" on what he saw as the unconstitutionality of the Capitol Grounds Act under which the men were being prosecuted.[108]

During the following week in the Senate, Allen described what he had seen when Coxey was arrested on May 1, accused the police of brutality, called the charges against Coxey and his men trivial, reproved Senator John Sherman (Republican, Ohio) for not coming to Coxey's defense, read the address that Coxey was prevented from delivering at the Capitol, argued against the constitutionality of the Capitol Grounds Act, noted that prior to and after Coxey's arrest thousands of people had walked on the grass at the Capitol and were not arrested, and submitted a resolution for the creation of a tripartisan senatorial investigating committee.[109] The use of force to deny Coxey his right to speak,

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26, pt. 5, p. 4511. According to Donald McMurry, Peffer, upon introducing Coxey's bills in the Senate, stated that he did so as a courtesy and that he "was not in sympathy with their objects." See McMurry, 41.

[106] Brands, 173.

[107] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4513, 4568; McMurry, 125.

[108] "Coxey's Defender a Senator," The New York Times, 5 May 1894, p. 5; McMurry, 123; "Coxey, Browne, Jones: The Three Commonwealers Appear in Court," unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d., AP (for quotation). Also assisting the defense were Populist Congressmen Lafe Pence, Thomas Hudson, Omer Kem, and Haldor Boen. According to Henry Tragle, the prosecutor, Arthur S. Birney, in summarizing the charges "ridiculed not only the defendants but Senator Allen as well." Henry I. Tragle, Coxey's Army (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1974), Broadsheet V "The Trial of Coxey, 'Coxeyism,' and the Meaning of the Movement."

[109] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4511-18, 4442-43, 4474, 4564-71, 4591.

Allen asserted, was an assault on all Americans' right to free speech and peaceful assembly.[110] Noting that some Senators were eager to resume the revenue debate, Allen remarked that, while the tariff question was important

> [i]t is a mere atom floating upon the ambient air as compared with the constitutional right of American citizens to peacefully assemble and peacefully speak their minds with reference to the public policy of the nation and to peacefully petition any branch of the Government for a redress of their grievances.
>
> The transaction that took place on these Capitol grounds on [May 1] was a scene worthy to take place in St. Petersburg or in the capital of any Eastern monarchy, but was entirely out of place in an orderly, civilized Republic like ours.[111]

Allen fought for the rights of labor on several other fronts. He denounced the importation of contract labor, which he believed capitalists pursued in order to lower workers' pay to "starvation wages," and called for new legislation against it.[112] He presented a resolution requiring the Secretary of the Treasury to report statistics on the violation of current federal laws aimed at prohibiting the practice as well as the Government's record of prosecuting violations.[113]

The events of the Pullman strike prompted him to take action on behalf of railroad workers. The resolution referred to earlier regarding a study of the viability of government ownership of the railways also called for senators to explore whether legislation was needed in order to effect a "more equitable [and] just" arrangement of

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[110] Ibid., 4515.

[111] Ibid., 4512-13.

[112] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974.

[113] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 5, p. 4310. See also pp. 4746-47.

wages. He submitted a bill limiting the Government's use of injunctions, protecting workers' arbitration rights, and stipulating that the charge of obstructing the mail could not be made in cases where mail cars were attached to trains that included passenger or non-postal freight cars.[114] In late July 1894, he presented a resolution directing Attorney General Richard Olney to provide copies to the Senate of all correspondence that occurred after June 1 between his office and the officers and attorneys of the railroads involved in the Pullman affair.[115]

In a Labor Day speech in Montana in 1895, he lamented the dearth of attention given in historical works to the "cause of labor," honored the contributions of the working men of the past, recalled the long history of the oppression and exploitation of workers, deplored the manner of the trial and sentencing of Eugene Debs, and accused President Cleveland of having violated the Constitution in dispatching troops to "invade" Illinois during the Pullman strike.[116]

In February 1894, before any of the labor-related events discussed above, an Omaha assembly of the Knights of Labor honored Allen, saying he "has ever had at heart the best interests of the toiling masses," for "the upright and manly stand he has taken in behalf of [them]...as against the encroachments of capital, corporations, combines and trusts."[117] The issue of labor was, of course, inseparable from the subject of the

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[114] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 7156. See also pt. 2, p. 1856; pt. 4, p. 3603; and Index p. 24.

[115] Ibid., pt. 8, p. 7846. See also 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 1, pp. 153-57.

[116] "Tinged with Populism," The Butte Miner, 3 Sep. 1895, AP.

[117] Untitled newspaper clipping, dateline 19 Feb. 1894, AP.

corporation, and the latter was inextricably linked to politics. But not only linked: in fact the owners of the large corporations formed the plutocracy which the Omaha Platform charged with being the "controlling influence dominating" the Democratic and Republican parties which had allowed "the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them."[118]

For Allen, that the United States was a plutocracy was obvious. Congress had been dominated by "corporations and ... the money power for more than a quarter of a century." During that time, he alleged, not a single important piece of legislation had passed Congress without the approval of the large corporations.[119] In a charge that both echoed the Omaha Platform and prefigured the centerpiece complaint which a century later motivated the presidential campaigns of left-liberal Ralph Nader, Allen insisted that the mainstream political parties were both under the control of the plutocrats. If the large corporations can essentially pick the two presidential candidates, "the accession of either of whom would be to continue their institutions and their special privileges, such as they now enjoy without restraint, and afford them an opportunity to eat out the substance of the people, do you suppose" he asked, "they are concerned in the slightest degree whether you call the one a Republican or the other a Democrat?"[120] Here Allen turned the tables on the many people who hurled the "anarchist" epithet at the Populists:

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[118] Johnson, 90.

[119] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6707.

[120] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 975. See also "Toast a Senator: W.V. Allen Banquetted by his Admirers," unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d. 1895, AP.

> Mr. President, none realize more fully than the Populists of this country the necessity for law and order. What, think you, is the difference between the anarchists who gather together in the back parlors of a countinghouse, or a bank, or some financial institution, and conspire to take forty or fifty million dollars from the people unlawfully, and the other anarchists who, driven by stress of circumstances, by hunger, by cold, by nakedness, and by want, commit, in their misery, some violation of the law to satisfy their natural desires? The one meets in a palace under circumstances most favorable to comfort. He is heralded to the country as a great financier; he is welcomed when he comes to Congress and finds fellowship in the different committee rooms, while the other poor fellow would be driven from the Capitol grounds as a criminal.[121]

Nor, he emphasized, were Populists out to destroy the corporation. So long as corporations refrained from attempting to corrupt the political process and acquire special privileges, the People's Party would have no problem with their going about their legitimate business.[122] The People's Party took this position on big business because it believed "the rights of the humblest citizen of the land are as sacred in our form of government as the rights of the most gigantic corporation."[123]

In his most recent book, Gene Clanton writes: "What exactly made one a Populist? No doubt a variety of factors came into play. Among them, none was stronger than the belief that people were, in the final analysis, of equal worth." Allen, Clanton continued, "articulated that thought at various times more clearly" than other

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[121] Ibid., 981. To Allen, control of the press, or at least much of it, was an essential condition for, and in the current situation a reality of, plutocratic dominance. Many of the large eastern daily newspapers were "as much in the pay of Wall street and its allied interests as ever a lawyer was in the pay of his client; and it is not only their hired duty to form public sentiment on leading questions, which is reflected through the minor country press to a very great extent, but to abuse, scandalize and traduce senators and representatives, whose actions they cannot control." "Letter from Senator Allen," Fremont Herald, 27 July 1894, AP.

[122] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6708. See also ibid., 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974.

[123] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6706. See also ibid., 6709. On Populists and the corporation, see R. Jeffrey Lustig, Corporate Liberalism: The Origins of Modern American Political Theory, 1890-1920 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 39-56, 69-77.

congressional Populists.[124] Clanton was looking at evidence from 1896 and later, and we have seen that Allen stressed this theme throughout the 1894-1895 period. All men were equal under the law, Allen thought, and to assertions and insinuations that the political opinions of some men were of greater import than others he responded that "I did not suppose that a man was required to possess a bank account before he could read Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations and understand it."[125]

Those whose egalitarian sensibilities were weak or dormant could benefit from turning to the Constitution, "that great charter of our liberties ... the most marvelous work of a free and enlightened people of ancient or modern times." It ought to be remembered, Allen told the Senate, that it was the intent of both the architects of the Constitution and those who ratified it that this be "a popular Government in the highest sense conceivable with safety, in which every citizen, however humble, or whatever his station in life might be, should enjoy an equal part in its management as well as the blessings to flow from its administration."[126]

So if a perverted political system was a key part of what was keeping many people down, it was time to clean it up. A good first step, Allen might have said, would be to get rid of all the lobbyists. As Peter Argersinger has written, because Populists saw lobbyists as furthering the "interests of the privileged at the expense" of the general public, they "were alarmed by the presence and activities of lobbyists, whom they found

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[124] Clanton, Congressional Populism, 91.

[125] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 977 (for quotation), 978, 971.

[126] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 2, p. 1376.

'haunting every crypt and corner of the Capitol.'"[127] True to Populist form, Allen thought lobbying wholly unjustifiable. A newspaper reporter recorded some of Allen's thoughts on it:

> [It] is an intolerable nuisance to men in Congress. I have not been here long, but these lobbyists are like pet birds; they hop about at will, and it doesn't take them long to get familiar. Unquestionably, the moral tone of Washington is not what it should be. Conditions and practices prevail here which would not be tolerated anywhere else in the country. Here, as nowhere else, the man who can see must see that without a radical change in the existing order of federal affairs there is no escape from one of the two evil fates before us, a monarchy or an oligarchy. No, the discouragements I have found here have not in any way affected my ideals. Because I find the enemy in a mud puddle, that's nothing to hinder my reaching down and strangling him.[128]

In August 1894, Allen offered a bill to outlaw "professional lobbying." It was referred to the Senate's Education and Labor Committee, where presumably it died of neglect.[129]

On 6 June 1894, Allen submitted a bill "to preserve the purity of national legislation."[130] It forbade any member of Congress from buying, owning, or selling any speculative stock the value of which could be affected by a vote of Congress, and prohibited members of Congress to be a member of, or have any financial interest in, any organization in which speculative stocks were bought or sold. Judges were expected to

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[127] Peter H. Argersinger, "No Rights on this Floor: Third Parties and the Institutionalization of Congress," in Argersinger, The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism and American Politics (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 213-45. See specifically 234-35.

[128] Untitled newspaper clipping, Washington Times, 17 Jan. 1894, AP.

[129] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 8, p. 8293.

[130] Ibid., pt. 6, p. 5833. See also vol. 26, Index, p. 41; Frank Leslie, "Relief for Inadvertent Senators," unidentified newspaper clipping, 21 June 1894, AP.

recuse themselves from cases in which they had some interest, Allen noted, so why should the same standard not apply to legislators?[131]

He also sought electoral reform. Allen insisted that "the absolute purity of the ballot" could only come with new legislation protecting voting rights and ensuring the integrity of contested-election and ballot fraud investigations.[132] After receiving dozens of letters and affidavits from Populists, Republicans, and Jeffersonian Democrats in Alabama, along with numerous requests to initiate a senatorial investigation of election fraud there, Allen presented a resolution for the formation of a tripartisan committee to investigate whether during the previous two-and-a-half years, "a republican form of government [had existed] in the State of Alabama."[133] Moreover, he favored election of United States Senators, President and Vice-President by direct popular vote, and a one-term limit on the presidency.[134]

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[131] William Vincent Allen, "How to Purify National Legislation," The North American Review 159 (Aug. 1894): 159-64; Shaw, 37-38.

[132] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974. See also CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 1, pp. 928-31.

[133] CR, 53-3, 1894-1895, vol. 27, pt. 1, p. 428; pt. 2, p. 1201; pt. 3, pp. 2012, 2022-36, 2071-78, 2112, 2151, 2319. See also William Allen, letter (reprint) to Colonel Warren S. Reese, 4 Apr. 1895, AP. An interesting sidelight: Among the materials Allen received from Alabama was a preamble and set of resolutions, jointly adopted by a caucus of "the People's Party and the Republican members of the general assembly of Alabama," thanking Allen for his work in the Alabama matter, requesting him to continue his "unselfish, patriotic, and noble efforts" on their behalf, and praising him for his "broad-minded statesmanship" and "that devotion to duty which has ever characterized all his public efforts." (2023-24) The communication was signed by "A.T. Goodwin," presumably mistyped shorthand for Populist Albert Taylor Goodwyn, United States Representative (1896-1897) and great-grandfather of historian Lawrence Goodwyn. Readers will recall that, in his history of the movement, Lawrence Goodwyn dismisses Allen as a "shadow Populist." On Albert Goodwyn, see Clanton, Congressional Populism, 177.

[134] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 974-76. The first (of ten) resolutions adopted by the 1892 Populist National Convention calls for "a free ballot and a fair count in all elections." The eighth calls for one-term limits on the President and Vice-President, and direct popular election of United States Senators. See Hicks, 443-44. Allen also wanted popular election of federal judges: "Where in the history of the modern world can be found a more perfect autocrat or one equal to the ordinary Federal judge? The Czar

By the end of the fifty-third Congress, Allen was no longer optimistic that the People's Party would soon rise to political predominance, predicting instead that its time would come in 1900. At the moment, the forces of plutocracy were still entrenched.[135] That this was so he might have attributed, in part, to the observation he once made that the American people take to change slowly and reluctantly, preferring to "suffer small evils" rather than adjust to the unfamiliar.[136]

The conservatism of the plutocrats was something else. Here was an antisocial conservatism in which policies aimed at advancing the interests of the elite few were promoted and implemented aggressively while those which had as their object the promotion of the commonweal and the pursuit of economic justice were either ignored or vigorously fought against, depending on the situation. This could be seen in the way the Senate conducted its affairs, which Allen thought was calculated to hinder the consideration of public business.[137] He argued in rather anti-intellectual fashion that if members of Congress would cooperate with each other, all laws essential to the public good could be passed in three months and both houses could "adjourn for two years if the Constitution would permit it." More plausibly, he believed that much of what transpired in Congress served primarily a partisan function.[138] Such conservatism, Allen held,

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of all the Russias never possessed half the power he possesses. He is an absolute unrestrained autocrat, so far as the masses of the people are concerned." (976)

[135] "Toast a Senator: W.V. Allen Banquetted by his Admirers," unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d. 1895, AP.

[136] "A Plea for Coxey," New York Morning Journal, 29 Apr. 1894, AP.

[137] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 4, p. 3610.

[138] Ibid., pt. 3, p. 2507.

"means rust; it means decay; it means stagnation; it means let things go as they will regardless of the consequences." "I have no patience," he concluded, with professed conservatives "who hide injustice and cupidity under assumed conservatism."[139]

Populism was conservatism too, but of a very different sort.[140] Instead of being controlled by, and directed in the interest of, those at the top of society, Populism was by and for the people. This was a progressive conservatism in which popular participation was a crucible whence beneficial social change came. Reforms had always percolated up from the common people, Allen told the Senate, and more change would come: "The backs which have been bowed to the yoke of oppression and injustice ... [for] so long will eventually be straightened, and man will stand forth in the light of the life that God intended he should stand."[141] The People's Party was a party of "enlightened and just individualism," founded on, and seeking to bring the nation back to, the political principles proclaimed by Thomas Jefferson and the other "great statesmen of his age."[142]

But if taking the country back to Jeffersonian principles while adapting those principles to the industrial age can be construed as conservative, what was being conserved, or, more accurately, resurrected, were the liberal traditions of Jeffersonian communitarianism and Jacksonian democracy. Hence Robert McMath's caution against being deceived by Populists' frequent professions of conservatism. The economic

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[139] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6714.

[140] "A Plea for Coxey," New York Morning Journal, 29 Apr. 1894, AP.

[141] CR, 53-3, 1895, vol. 27, pt. 2, p. 973.

[142] Ibid., 971 (for second quote), 981 (for first quote).

democracy they advocated "locates them in the same spot on the social spectrum as the Knights of Labor, who occupied, according to Bruce Laurie, 'a middle ground between the individualistic libertarianism of bourgeois America and the collectivism of working-class socialists.'"[143] So Allen, proud member of a party he called conservative, reflected that "[a]gitation, rightly interpreted, means life, energy, progress, justice eventually, if pursued in the proper spirit and with the proper motives and intelligence."[144]

Midway through the period covered in this chapter, Henry Vincent's mid-road Populist newspaper The American Nonconformist, opined that "Allen's career in the Senate has been brilliant and valuable."[145] That the paper would express such a view ought not to be surprising, as Allen had thus far indisputably been a *Populist* Senator. It remains to be seen whether he would remain one through the rest of his Senate tenure.

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[143] McMath, 72-73.

[144] CR, 53-2, 1894, vol. 26, pt. 7, p. 6714.

[145] The American [Indianapolis] Nonconformist, 21 June 1894, newspaper clipping, AP. In August 1894, Allen attended the Nebraska People's Independent Party State convention at Grand Island. The Platform promulgated there read in part: "We heartily approve the course of Senator William V. Allen ... for [his] fidelity and loyalty to our entire interests." University of Nebraska, Nebraska Party Platforms, 1858-1938 ed. John G.W. Lewis (Works Projects Administration, 1940), 192. For a brief note on Allen's attendance, see Addison Erwin Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People, vol. 1 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), 748.

CHAPTER FOUR

Politics and Radical Legislation, 1895-1901

> Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street and for Wall Street. The great common people of this country are slaves, and monopoly is the master.
>
> Populist orator Mary Elizabeth Lease of Kansas, 1890[1]

> Our country is coming to the point where the government is to be made a government of the banks, by the banks, and for the banks, and the people are to disappear except as the mere producers of wealth at a very low standard of civilization.
>
> William V. Allen, 1896[2]

Beginning this chapter with the foregoing statements is useful for our analysis in two ways. First is their obvious similarity. While Allen's is the less audacious (and less hyperbolic) of the two, it is a thoroughly typical expression of Populist radical producerism.[3] Second, their juxtaposition provides an opportunity to contrast the development of Lease's and Allen's political thinking in a way that provides a better picture of Allen's place in the Populist revolt. By the mid-summer of 1896, the firebrand Populist from Kansas, whose (possibly apocryphal) exhortation to farmers to "raise less corn and more *Hell*" has always been one of the more famous elements of Populist lore,

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[1] Quoted in John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (1931; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 160.

[2] William V. Allen, The Financial Policy (Washington, 1893), 8, reprint of Congressional Record (hereafter CR), 54th Cong., 1st sess., 1896, vol. 28, pt. 7, Appendix, pp. 310-20.

[3] Producerism, ("artisanal republicanism" in the antebellum period) was a name used by Populists for the general philosophical position that the wealth created by workers was rightfully theirs, and that capitalists who would unjustly lay claim to it were economic parasites. Robert C. McMath, Jr., American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 51; Norman Pollack, The Just Polity: Populism, Law, and Human Welfare (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 84-85, 190-92.

had become, as fellow Kansan William Peffer would four years later, a supporter of Republican William McKinley.[4] On the other hand, as the decade wound down Allen became more rather than less radical.

That the sincerity of Allen's Populism was apparent to contemporaries explains a comment made by the Maine Populist in December 1895. An editorial writer, seeing the long debate over the Wilson-Gorman Tariff bill as a "fake fight from beginning to end," criticized Allen for having "thrown his great abilities into that sham contest." So displeased was he that he chose to classify Allen as a Democrat in terms of the role that he played in the wrangling over the tariff bill.[5]

Still, the writer held Allen in the highest esteem. While he did not accept Allen's explanation for his approach to the tariff, he was convinced that the Nebraska Senator would never "willingly betray the principles of the People's party." Noting that Allen's recent letter to the paper indicated that he did not wish to seek the People's Party presidential nomination in 1896, this writer asserted that that decision "will be read with regret and sorrow by thousands of earnest reformers in every section of our land." Allen, the writer continued, "is the most gifted, brilliant and magnetic of our national leaders," and whatever his future course "as long as his matchless abilities are used to defend the

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[4] Hicks, 160 (for quotation); William A. Peffer, Populism, Its Rise and Fall, ed. Peter H. Argersinger (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 21; Gene Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 44.

[5] Untitled editorial, Maine Populist, 5 Dec. 1895, Allen Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter AP).

principles of the People's party he will have no warmer supporter or more ardent admirer than the Maine Populist and its editor."[6]

Three months later, in March 1896, Populist Richard Goldman wrote a long letter to the Maine Populist on the subject of who the party ought to nominate for president. After considering several oft-mentioned possibilities, including Senator Peffer, Ignatius Donnelly, and Eugene V. Debs, Goldman came to Allen, whom he said had the "most complete qualifications for the standard bearer of our party." "A more eloquent speaker" than Allen, Goldman averred, "does not live....He is able; he is honest; he is experienced. He is young...and intellectually superb."[7]

During late 1895 and early 1896 Allen was the leading favorite among many Populists for their party's 1896 presidential nomination.[8] In 1895, Populist Congressman Jerry Simpson (Kansas) predicted that Allen would be the party's presidential candidate.[9]

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Richard Goldman, letter, Maine Populist, 12 Mar. 1896, AP.

[8] References to the Allen-for-President phenomenon in the published literature are few and brief. According to historian Addison Sheldon, who knew Allen personally and presumably recalled the groundswell of support that arose among Populists for an Allen candidacy, by 1896 Allen was the Populist Party's "strongest candidate" for president and was "widely regarded" as the likely Populist nominee. Addison E. Sheldon, "Nebraskans I Have Known," Nebraska History 19 (1938): 197 (for first quotation)); Sheldon, Nebraska: The Land and the People, vol. 1 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1931), 761 (for second quotation). Ronald Fahl writes that contemporaries saw Allen as, "were it not for Bryan's mercurial rise, the probable [Populist] standard-bearer in 1896." Ronald J. Fahl, review of Western Populism, by Karel Bicha, Pacific Northwest Quarterly 69 (1978): 138. Unfortunately, the neglect of the effort to draft Allen for a presidential run includes Robert F. Durden's otherwise insightful and informative The Climax of Populism: The Election of 1896 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965). Evidently, the only other scholar to notice the effort to draft Allen was Mittie Y. Scott, who, unfortunately, provides no details. The evidence cited in the present study, though, seems to justify her comment that, had Allen so desired, "it is very probable that he could have had the nomination." Mittie Young Scott, "The Life and Political Career of William Vincent Allen," (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1927), 69.

[9] Unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d., AP; Red Cloud Argus, n.d., AP.

A Populist newspaper in Nebraska observed approvingly that Allen was likely to head the "populist and bimetallic tickets in this year's contest against Toryism and English rule."[10] In April 1896, the Topeka Advocate noted that the potential selection of Allen had been "discussed freely by the press, and the majority of those giving a public expression in regard to the matter have declared for him."[11]

The boom for Allen was nationwide among Populists. The Dakota Farmers' Leader of Canton, South Dakota, preferred Allen, whom it saw as "a magnificent example of the American patriot—-a second Lincoln."[12] The Reformer of Oklahoma called for the nomination of Allen, who, its editorialist wrote, "represents Populism in its best sense."[13] Populists in Zaneville, Ohio wrote to a Nebraska newspaper to declare that "We are all for Allen."[14] In Texas, a full month after Allen's official announcement removing himself from consideration, a correspondent to the Southern Mercury wrote that in Smith County the nomination of Allen "seems to be the popular idea."[15] During the late winter or early spring of 1896, the Missouri World polled its readers as to their

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[10] [David City, Nebraska] People's Banner, n.d., 1896, AP.

[11] "Not a Candidate," Topeka Advocate, 22 Apr. 1896, AP. Discussion of Allen as a presidential prospect occurred as early as July 1894. In his flattering profile of Allen, editor Albert Shaw wrote that were the Populists to win the presidency in 1900 (Allen had told him he was skeptical of the party's prospects in 1896), it would be with Allen leading the ticket. Albert Shaw, "William V. Allen: A Populist. A Character Sketch and Interview," Review of Reviews 10 (July 1894): 31.

[12] Editorial, Dakota Farmers' Leader, 27 Mar. 1896, AP. See also 9 Feb. 1894 and 22 June 1894, AP.

[13] The [Kingfisher, Oklahoma Territory] Reformer, 23 Jan. 1896, AP.

[14] Nebraska Independent, 5 Mar. 1896, AP.

[15] Southern Mercury, 26 Apr. 1896, AP. See also the [Texas] Real Republic, 30 Jan. and 5 Mar. 1896, AP.

preferences specifically for the Populist presidential nomination. Of 2887 votes cast, Allen received 1481 or fifty-one percent, with Tom Watson of Georgia coming in second with 368 votes.[16] In January 1896, Populist Senator Marion Butler (North Carolina) stated that Allen "is the strongest man in the party, and if he permits his name to be used in the convention he will have a good following."[17]

Many Nebraska Populists saw Allen as a veritable paladin of Populism and they overwhelmingly supported him for President. Populist newspaper editorials calling for Allen's selection were widespread. The O'Neill, Nebraska Beacon Light regarded Allen as the foremost figure in American politics, "the bulwark of the reform cause." The paper thought him "the Abraham Lincoln of the common people" and believed he "would lead the toiling masses up out of the mortgage and bond slavery as Lincoln led the people in 1860."[18] The Wahoo, Nebraska New Era thought Allen, the "leading man in American politics," possessed "the ability and integrity to lift the people from the mire and deliver them from the hands of our British oppressors."[19] After Allen had removed

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[16] "Result of the Vote," Missouri World, n.d. clipping, AP. Rounding out the top five were James B. Weaver of Iowa, 216; Eugene V. Debs of Indiana, 209; and Jacob Coxey of Ohio, 190. See also ibid., 18 Mar. 1896, AP. The paper reported that ballots were received from every state and territory save Delaware and Rhode Island. The National Watchman, the Populist newspaper published at Washington, D.C., also conducted a nationwide poll. A preliminary, impressionistic report of the results, published at an unknown date in 1896 and present in the Allen Papers in the form of a newspaper clipping, shows Allen in first place "by a few votes." Ibid., AP.

[17] Quoted in the Beatrice [Nebraska] Tribune, 17 Jan. 1896, AP.

[18] "Presidential Timber," Editorial, [O'Neill, Nebraska] Beacon Light, 13 Mar. 1896, AP. The paper's choice for vice-president was Eugene Debs. The two men had the qualities needed to "lift a downtrodden and almost crushed people from the mire of bankruptcy, despond and suicide, and again raise them to the exalted plane of manhood, and free them from the yoke of British oppression and Wall street task masters."

[19] The [Wahoo] New Era, n.d., quoted in the Exeter [Nebraska] Enterprise 21 Mar. 1896, AP. See also the Wahoo New Era, n.d. and 27 Feb. 1896, AP.

himself from consideration, the Nebraska Independent, the official newspaper of the state People's Party, asked whether he was "at liberty to decline a nomination which seems to be the desire of the whole party, and which the interests of the common people of the whole nation demands that he shall accept?"[20]

Such sentiments were widespread among Nebraska Populists. In March 1896, the Trenton, Nebraska People's Sentinel conducted a poll of its readers to ascertain their preference for president, regardless of the candidates' party affiliation. Allen received 69 of the 104 votes cast or 66 percent.[21] On 9 March, when Populist Governor Silas A. Holcomb indicated that he did not wish to be considered for the presidency, part of his statement read

> I believe, however, in standing up for Nebraska, and am of the opinion that she has an illustrious citizen well qualified to perform the functions of this most important office of the government more satisfactorily to the great masses of the people than any president since the days of Abraham Lincoln. I am for Senator Allen and believe him to be the choice of the people of Nebraska and I predict his unanimous nomination at St. Louis July 22 next.[22]

In mid-March, J.A. Edgerton, Chairman of the People's Party State central committee, predicted that Allen would receive a unanimous endorsement from the delegates at the

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[20] Quoted in "Not a Candidate," Topeka Advocate, 22 Apr. 1896, AP. For other Nebraska Populist papers calling for Allen's nomination, see the following newspaper clippings in the Allen Papers: the Exeter Enterprise, n.d.; the Polk County [Osceola] Independent, 13 Feb. 1896; the Greeley Citizen, 13 Mar. 1896; the David City People's Banner, 28 Feb. and 23 Apr. 1896; the Schubert Citizen, n.d.; the Madison Reporter, n.d.; the Madison Star, (dateline 3 Apr. 1896), n.d.; the Beatrice Tribune, 20 Mar. and 17 Apr. 1896; the [Chadron] Signal, 11 Apr. 1896; [Clay Center] Patriot, 13 Mar. and 3 Apr. 1896; [Grand Island] Free Press, n.d. See also the Saint Paul [Nebraska] Phonograph, 20 Mar. 1896, AP.

[21] "The Presidential Contest," [Trenton] People's Sentinel, 13 Mar. 1896, AP. Democrat Benjamin Tillman of South Carolina was second with twelve votes.

[22] "Holcomb Not a Candidate," Lincoln Journal, 10 Mar. 1896, AP. See also the Butler County [David City] Press, 20 Mar. 1896, AP.

upcoming state convention. "There is no division among Nebraska populists on that question," he told a reporter, and he went on to predict that at the national party convention Allen would be nominated on the first ballot.[23]

On 24 March, Allen wrote to Governor Holcomb to relate that he did not wish to be considered for the nomination. The forty-nine year-old Senator indicated that his request was due in part to family considerations, and added:

> I do not feel that my experience has been such as to warrant me in being a candidate for the nomination, or in accepting it if it should be tendered me. There are many older and abler men in the party than I am, highly well qualified to make the race, and I feel confident that I can do the cause greater good by remaining where I am and fighting in the ranks for success....The welfare of the party, and therefore the welfare of the country, is to be consulted at all times; principles count for everything, and men for nothing, in our struggle.[24]

Yet the publication of this letter in the press did not immediately put an end to efforts to draft Allen. On 14 April, Populists met in Omaha and created the William V. Allen Club, with an initial membership of 269, for the purpose of promoting an Allen presidential candidacy. The resolutions adopted at its first meeting included the following tribute:

> Senator Allen owes his exalted place in the esteem and respect of his countrymen to his high character, to his intelligent appreciation of the needs of the people, to his courageous defense of popular rights against the encroachments of purchased privilege and organized wealth, to his steady opposition to the substitution of the power of a greedy and irresponsible aristocracy for the liberty of the citizen, to his continuous protest against the transfer of the property of the masses to the few who have not earned it.[25]

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[23] "Mr. Edgerton's Views," unidentified newspaper clipping, 19 Mar. 1896, AP. Also on 19 March, the Nebraska Independent published the enthusiastic endorsement of an Allen presidential bid by a fraternal society called the Eureka Spring Council of the United American Constitutional Brotherhood, AP.

[24] Quoted in "Not a Candidate," Topeka Advocate, 22 Apr. 1896, AP.

[25] "To Boom Senator Allen," [Omaha] Western Laborer, 18 Apr. 1896, AP; "Nebraska Populists Organize," Washington Post, 14 Apr. 1896, AP.

Many of Allen's Populist contemporaries considered him a true Populist. In Nebraska, Populist newspaper assessments of Allen typically sounded like that of the Allen News, which thought he was performing "more and better work for the people than all the rest of the Senate put together," or that of Creighton-based The People's News, which considered Allen the leading "champion of American principles," or that of the Nebraska Independent, which opined that he was on a "masterly course in dealing with great political questions."[26] The platform adopted at the August 5 Nebraska state Populist convention endorsed Allen's Senate performance because "he has so ably stood for the rights of the people against the insolence of organized wealth," and subsequent People's Party platforms in 1897 and 1898 praised him in similar terms.[27] In 1899, after Allen's successor in the Senate died before taking office, Populist Governor William A. Poynter appointed Allen to fill the vacancy.[28]

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[26] Undated quotations from the [Creighton, Nebraska] The People's News and the Allen [Nebraska] News are in "William V. Allen: Former United States Senator from Nebraska[,] Candidate for District Judge 9th District of Nebraska," campaign pamphlet, 1911, AP. This source includes similar expressions of opinion from the Populist newspapers Blair [Nebraska] Republic, 31 May 1894, and [David City, Nebraska] People's Banner, n.d. The Nebraska Independent, n.d., clipping, AP. For an example of how the minority of Allen's critics among Nebraska Populists saw him, see "The Itch for Sham Respectability," [North Platte] Independent Era, 24 Dec. 1896, AP. A writer for the paper argued that Allen had performed "well so far as his knowledge of the principles of the People's party goes." However, by emphasizing free silver rather than fiat money, and by participating in tariff debates, Allen had shown himself to be "too much a cringer before Eastern sentiment to earn the title of leader or he is as yet too unlearned in the principles of the People's party to give correct expression to them."

[27] University of Nebraska, Nebraska Party Platforms, 1858-1938, ed. John G.W. Lewis (Works Projects Administration, 1940), 213 (for quotation), 223, 236. The 1899 convention occurred after Allen's Senate term had expired and before he was appointed to fill the vacancy opened by the death of his successor. In 1900 Allen served as chairman of the state convention but his political course was denounced as "unpopulistic" and "dishonorable" by the splinter middle-of-the-road faction at a separate convention. Ibid., 258, 259 (for quotations).

[28] Paolo E. Coletta, "A Tempest in a Teapot? — Governor Poynter's Appointment of William V. Allen to the United States Senate," Nebraska History 38 (1957): 155-63. Holcomb (1895-99) and Poynter

On the movement's national stage, Allen was generally regarded as a genuine leader of the Populist fraternity. In July of 1896, in a vote that under the delegate system likely reflected the sentiments of the party rank and file, Allen was elected permanent chairman of the People's Party National Convention at St. Louis.[29] In 1897, he was a member of the National Committee of the People's Party.[30]

The results of an 1898 survey of Allen's peers in the Senate indicate that he had earned the admiration of his party's highest elected officials. Senator James H. Kyle (South Dakota) thought Allen had "few superiors" among the nation's "public men". Senator Henry Heitfeld (Idaho) wrote that Allen had "no superior and few equals" in the United States Senate, and characterized him as a "legislator of untiring energy and sound patriotic views." For Senator William A. Harris (Kansas), Allen was "a man of splendid information, and is always on the alert to help good legislation and to check that which is bad...[we Populists] are very proud of his ability." And Senator George F. Turner (Washington) wrote that he had "the very highest opinion" of Allen, whom he thought

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(1899-1901) were both elected through fusion with the Democrats. Nevertheless, Holcomb earned the approval of no less a Populist figure than Senator Peffer, who in March 1896 stated, regarding the selection of the People's Party presidential nominee, "I incline strongly to the opinion that Governor Holcomb...would make an acceptable and a strong candidate." "Holcomb Not a Candidate," Lincoln Journal, 10 Mar. 1896, AP. As to Poynter, Coletta writes that he was "elected as a Democratic-Populist (mostly Populist) fusionist." Coletta, 155. The deceased Senator was Republican Monroe L. Hayward. Republicans elected him after gaining a majority in the legislature in 1899. Ibid., 155-56.

[29] Hicks, 361-62.

[30] CR, 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 3, p. 2618. The period of Allen's membership on the committee is not known, but given his many contacts with party leaders during the election year of 1896, it is likely that he was on the committee for most or all of that year.

"is sound on all the great political questions of the day. He is a tribune of the people, and lives up to that position in his every word, thought and deed."[31]

Allen had no doubts about his commitment to Populism. In a letter of February 1896, he wrote "It must be distinctly understood that I am a Populist at all times and under all circumstances."[32] About a year later, he related that he agreed completely with the Omaha Platform excepting its subtreasury proposal, and that he supported the 1896 People's Party Platform in its entirety.[33] In a farewell speech at the end of his elected term, he reminded his peers that he had come to the Senate as a Populist, and that throughout his tenure he had been committed to the party's principles as proclaimed in its national platforms and had given these his "undivided allegiance."[34]

As Allen saw it, the People's Party was based on the beliefs that all citizens are equal before the law and that government ought to enact and enforce "just laws in an honest manner for the advancement of society."[35] Personally, he espoused a philosophy

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[31] "Judge Allen: Flattering Tributes to His Ability as a Lawyer and Statesman," collected transcript of letters written to W.E. Reed of Madison, Nebraska, n.d., AP. The Kyle and Heitfeld letters are undated. Harris's letter is dated 22 Mar. 1898, and Turner's 1 Mar. 1898. Peffer was out of the Senate by this time. Little is known concerning his view of Allen or the nature of their relationship. Peffer did write, concerning Allen's early months in the Senate, that the two of them, along with Kyle, held periodic meetings and that they "were in the main agreed upon a line of policy." He also wrote that Allen "stood head and shoulders above all the rest in both Houses in point of physical and intellectual power," and added rather cryptically that Allen, "when not goaded to extremes, was a conservative man." William A. Peffer, Populism, Its Rise and Fall, ed. Peter H. Argersinger (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 96, 97 (first quotation), 185 (subsequent quotations).

[32] William V. Allen, letter to W.W. Mullens, 4 Feb. 1896, published in the Utah Democrat, 28 Feb. 1896, AP.

[33] CR, 54-2, 1897, vol. 29, pt.1, p. 539.

[34] CR, 55-3, 1899, vol. 32, pt. 3, p. 2617. See also ibid., 2618; 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 6, pp. 5614-17; Gene Clanton, Congressional Populism and the Crisis of the 1890s (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 99.

[35] "The Cause of Labor," Journal of the Knights of Labor, 4 June 1896, AP.

of "enlightened and just individualism, accompanied by proper cooperation." The "opportunities of life," he thought, ought always to remain "open to every man, woman and child, and not foreclosed by legislation, or by neglect to properly legislate."[36] This outlook is fundamentally the same as that of Peffer, who once wrote that "the one great, basic principle underlying...[Populism] is the *equality* of human rights—-first, to the rights of the people as individual persons, and second, to the rights, powers, and duties of the people as a whole."[37] As Gretchen Ritter writes, antimonopolists, including the Populists, endeavored to hinder "the emergence of a financial conservative society in which the few held power over the many, and to preserve a nation in which economic opportunity was available to all and political power was held by each."[38]

Allen likened Populism to Anglo-American Whiggery, specifically that of the American colonial revolutionaries and the nineteenth-century British Whigs, Liberals, and Radicals. Populism was opposed to what he saw as the Hamiltonian ideology of the Democrats and Republicans, which stood squarely in the tradition of Whiggery's opponents such as Royalists, Tories, and other groups which sought to look after the interests of a select few rather than the welfare of the many.[39] The consistent failure of

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[36] "Allen Tired of its Harping: Populist Pretender, Published at Lincoln, is Given a Knockout Blow," Omaha World-Herald, 15 May 1895, AP. Allen stated elsewhere that the People's Party was "a party of enlightened and just individualism." "The Cause of Labor," Journal of the Knights of Labor, 4 June 1896, AP. For more on Allen's commitment to equality see CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 3, pp. 2547-48; 56-2, 1900, vol. 34, pt. 3, p. 2001; "Senator Allen for Nebraska," Omaha Enterprise, 19 Dec. 1896, AP; Clanton, Congressional Populism, 91.

[37] Quoted in Argersinger, Populism and Politics, 227 (italics in original).

[38] Gretchen Ritter, Goldbugs and Greenbacks: The Antimonopoly Tradition and the Politics of Finance in America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 194.

Republicans and conservative Democrats to act in the interests of the people was bringing the country to a grievous state. Some people had become imprudent enough, Allen told the Senate, to suggest that the American republican experiment was a failure and thus oligarchy was called for. While the common people would be allowed the vote, their votes would be irrelevant. "The great masses of the people are simply to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, to earn that the few may reap the reward from their toil."[40]

Thus he rebuked attempts by critics of the People's Party to link it with either of the main parties, with which the People's Party had "no kinship."[41] Emphasizing the independence of the Populists from the Democrats, Allen later insisted that the difference between the two organizations was "as marked and plain as the distinction between the sun and the moon."[42] There is no contradiction here with Allen's support of fusion with the Democrats. His view of the matter seems to have been that while the People's Party was a distinct organization with a policy agenda superior to that of the main parties, its interests were at times best served through coalition. In the case of the national election of 1896, while the differences between the Populists and Democrats were substantial, the considerable degree of commonality between the Populists and Bryan Democrats was

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[39] "The Cause of Labor," Journal of the Knights of Labor, 4 June 1896, AP; CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 3, p. 2547; CR, 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 1, p. 980.

[40] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 3, p. 2547 (for quotation), 2548.

[41] CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 5, p. 4667.

[42] CR, 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 3, p. 2376.

sufficient to make fusion the best course of action under the less than ideal circumstances.[43]

In 1898, although he complimented the Democrats on their support of free silver and for having "advanced" to the Populist position on national banks, he insisted that the two parties still differed substantially.[44] The Democracy was preferable to the Republicans' "party of plutocracy," the "bond servant of the gold aristocracy of the money power of America and Europe."[45] Still, the Democratic Party "falls short of reaching the high plane of Populism." Populists, Allen told the Senate, believe that "natural monopolies" like railroads, telegraphs, and telephones, "must be owned and operated by the Government" in the public interest. They believed as well in reforms such as the direct popular election of United States Senators and the use of the initiative and referendum "when practicable." In these and other ways the People's Party "differs widely and wisely" from the Democratic Party.[46]

So Populists, he once remarked, found labels such as "'republican populists,' or 'democratic populists'" to be repugnant.[47] Allen always cooperated fully with his

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[43] For the 1896 platforms of the People's Party, the Democrats (for free silver and an income tax, against the note-issuing power of the National Banks, interest-bearing government bonds, and government by injunction) and the Republicans (which shares none of the above positions), see National Party Platforms: Volume 1 1840-1956, compiled by Donald Bruce Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 97-100, 104-106, 107-09.

[44] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, pp. 419, 420 (for the quotation).

[45] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, pp. 419 (for the first quotation), 420; (for the second quotation); Allen, The Financial Policy, 15.

[46] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 420. Direct election and the initiative and referendum were among the ten resolutions "expressive of the sentiment" of the 1892 Omaha Populist convention. See Hicks, 443-44.

[47] "Senate Reorganization," Washington Star, 30 Dec. 1895, AP.

Populist colleagues in refusing to ally with either of the main parties in the organization of the Senate. In May 1896, responding to allegations that the Populists had negotiated with the Republicans in reorganization, Allen replied that between the Populists and representatives of the major parties there had been no more discussion than had occurred "between the Populists and the Czar of Russia."[48]

Two historians have suggested that during the two years leading up to the 1896 presidential election Allen advocated a step back from the Omaha Platform so as to draw more voters into the Populist orbit. Lawrence Goodwyn argues that Allen displayed "no visible qualms" about jettisoning most of the Omaha Platform, for his only interest lay in enhancing his own political prospects.[49] Peter Argersinger contends that Allen favored trimming the Populist reform agenda down to the sole issue of free silver, and notes that prior to a December 1894 Populist conference in St. Louis, Allen expressed his wish that the conference would dispense with "'all questionable doctrines and non-essentials.'"[50]

Yet Allen consistently asserted his commitment to the entire Omaha Platform. In early 1895, he cosigned an open letter to the members of the People's Party that encouraged Populists to enlist the support and cooperation of anyone who thought it

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[48] CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 5, p. 4667; Peffer, Rise and Fall, 96-97, 143, 185; Peter H. Argersinger, "No Rights on this Floor: Third Parties and the Institutionalization of Congress," The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 22 (1992): 655-690; reprinted in Argersinger, The Limits of Agrarian Radicalism: Western Populism and American Politics (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 213-45. See specifically 217-18; "Senate Reorganization," Washington Star, 30 Dec. 1895, AP. In the upper chamber the People's Party wielded the balance of power twice during the 1890s (1895 and 1897). Seeking to preserve their autonomy, in both instances they refused interparty cooperation, thereby leaving the organization of the Senate to the Republicans. David J. Rothman, Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869-1901 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 70-71.

[49] Goodwyn, 426-27, 440.

imperative to focus politically on the financial question, "the mightiest and most fundamental controversy evolved during the present century." The letter of course referred to free silver, but it also asserted the necessity of terminating both the issue power of the national banks and interest-bearing government bond issues, and lamented the early post-Civil War conspiracy to eliminate the Greenbacks. It did not call for discarding any part of the Omaha Platform.[51]

Allen did think a rhetorical focus on the money problem in general, and free silver in particular, good politics, but no evidence has come to light showing that he wanted to discard any of the explicit demands of the Omaha Platform. In February 1895, Allen told the Chicago Times that the People's Party ought to limit its agitation to "the three great issues before the people—namely, land, money, transportation." The people, "are ready for reform" in these areas, "and upon a strong platform, clear and rational," it "could carry the country were it to confine itself to these three issues."[52] Six months later, Allen told a reporter that while in 1896 the subtreasury scheme was likely to be dropped from, and some of the minor details would be revised in, the Omaha Platform, "its cardinal principles will be maintained." When asked by a reporter whether the People's party "could well afford to drop its other planks, temporarily at least, and make

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[50] Argersinger, Populism and Politics, 204-05.

[51] "A Card to the People's Party," unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d., Feb. 1895, AP. In addition to Allen, the letter was signed by People's Party Chairman Herman E. Taubeneck, 1892 Populist presidential candidate James B. Weaver, Senators Kyle and Harris, Congressmen Lafe Pence and John Bell (Colorado), Omer Kem and William McKeighan (Nebraska), Haldor Boen (Minnesota), and Thomas Hudson, William Baker, John Davis, and Jerry Simpson (Kansas). The letter probably had its origins in the conference Argersinger refers to above.

[52] "Senator Allen," quoted in the Chicago Times, reprinted in the Fremont [Nebraska] Leader, 1 Feb. 1895, AP.

the fight in 1896 on free silver alone?" Allen answered: "I don't think so. I have given a great deal of attention to that subject, and I don't see any reason why we should drop everything but silver, for there are reforms that are almost as necessary and important as free coinage." While he was against making any concessions to single-issue silverites, because doing so would ultimately "disrupt our party," he thought it wise to emphasize the financial question, for "[n]o party ever came into power with more than one great issue."[53] A newspaper characterized Allen's attitude on the electoral politics of Populist reform by writing that he "had simply adopted the policy of hauling as many logs up the hill at a time as was possible," and he would return "after the others when he got those up."[54]

What then, did Allen mean by "questionable doctrines and non-essentials?" Most likely he had in mind the subtreasury plan, which as we have seen he had always opposed.[55] The term "non-essentials" is likely a reference to one or more of the

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[53] "He's Out for Silver," The Butte [Montana] Anaconda Standard, 2 Sept. 1895, AP. The reader may notice a seeming contradiction between Allen's assertion that the people were "ready for reform" in all three main areas of the Populist program and his belief in the need to emphasize silver and the national bank issue. I believe he meant that political and economic conditions were such that the people would accept Populist remedies, but that they were not radicalized enough to embrace all of them at once. Most likely he agreed with Senator Butler's view that because, unhappily, the majority of voters were not prepared to accept the whole People's Party Platform, the prudent course was for opponents of the money power to "'join hands on what we do agree on.'" Quoted in James L. Hunt, Marion Butler and American Populism (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 96.

[54] "Toast a Senator: Hon. W.V. Allen Banquetted by His Admirers," unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d., 1895, AP. For an interesting defense of Allen's position by a Populist newspaper see "Stop Your Kicking," Beatrice [Nebraska] Tribune, n.d., AP. Incidentally, this source quotes Henry Vincent defending Populists' free silver agitation.

[55] Allen's statements on intrinsic value and fiat money remained consistent with his past record. See CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 1, pp. 254, 907; pt. 5, p. 4669; pt. 6, pp. 5608, 5618-19; 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 419; pt. 2, pp. 1676-78; 56-1, vol. 33, pt. 2, pp. 1620, 1640; pt. 3, p. 2583; 56-2, vol. 34, pt. 3, p. 2002; "The Cause of Labor: Senator W.V. Allen's Great Speech in Boston," Journal of the Knights of Labor, 4 June 1986, AP. Populist historians will no doubt find these statements particularly interesting:

supplemental resolutions passed by the Omaha convention but which were not technically parts of the Platform.[56]

In his long speech to the 1896 People's Party National Convention, Allen defended fusion with the Democrats on the grounds that doing so would promote the Populist reform agenda. In making his case Allen focused primarily on the threat that rejecting fusion posed to the prospects for an income tax, the withdrawal of the money issue power of the national banks, and the nationalization of the railroads, telephones, and telegraphs--arguably the three most radical planks in the Populist platform.[57]

"The Democratic party, as I understand, believe in the constant redeemability of all forms of paper money. I do not believe in that; and my party does not believe in it in the popular sense." He went on: "I do not believe it is necessary to redeem a limited volume of full legal-tender money in anything. I believe every time it is paid for a debt and every time it is exchanged for property it is redeemed in the full sense; and in that sense I believe in redeemability, and in no other. The Democratic party does not believe in that." CR, 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 3, p. 2376.

[56] As this study indicates, Allen supported, at least, most of the Omaha resolutions. While he supported the initiative and referendum, he thought it nonviable above the municipal level. No evidence has been found that Allen absolutely opposed any of the resolutions, although after his Senate service he may have changed his mind about the wisdom of the direct election of Senators. An undated source shows that he did not favor the reform, but in a speech written in 1905 he expressed his support of it. "Is This Treason?" unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d. but after Allen's Senate service, AP; William V. Allen, "The Advancement of Constitutional Doctrines," typed speech draft, p. 38, AP. For Allen's earlier support of direct election, see "The Cause of Labor"; CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 420; 55-3, 1899, vol. 32, pt. 2, p. 1678. For his support of other Omaha resolutions, see (initiative and referendum) 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 420; (eight hour law for workers) CR, 54-2, 1897, vol. 29, pt. 1, pp. 645-46, 710-11; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 7, pp. 6534-35; (fair pensions) CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 926-32, 960; pt. 5, p. 4293; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 1, pp. 676-683; pt. 3, pp. 2527, 2588.

[57] For critical views of Allen's role at the convention, see Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 260-65; and Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 480-81, 487-92. An interpretation that does not hold Allen to have been a corrupt influence at the convention is in Durden, 42-43. For a persuasive defense of the Populists' fusion strategy in 1896, see Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America: Midwestern Populist Thought (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962), 103-43. For a transcript of Allen's speech see William J. Bryan, The First Battle: A Story of the Campaign of 1896 (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1897), 264-70. That Allen's support of fusion was in the mainstream of the Populist movement is evidenced by the sentiment of the delegates to the 1896 Nebraska State Populist convention, who voted 699 to 34 to endorse the Democratic presidential ticket. Clifford Ernest Bowman, "The Local Nebraska Press and National Politics, 1896-1908" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1964), 116. According to

As to the explicit demands of the Omaha Platform, Allen continued to support and fight for all of them.[58] In examining his record during this period (1895-1901), the following pages will focus on two planks: the demand for a graduated income tax, and the call for the nationalization of the railroads, telephone and telegraph. Responses to these planks are perhaps particularly instructive, for they are among the most radical in

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John Hicks, Allen favored, at least initially, the nomination of Democrat Arthur M. Sewall of Maine for the Populist vice-presidential nomination. See Hicks, 362-63.

[58] For Allen's support of the platform demands, see:

For a "national currency" (see note 55 above) and termination of the money-issue power of the National Banks: CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 418-19; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 3, pp. 2581-83; Allen, The Financial Policy, 7-8; "Allen Roasts Morton," Madison Star, 21 July 1899, AP; "The Cause of Labor," AP; William V. Allen, "The Populist Program," The Independent 52 (Feb. 1900): 475; "The Leader of the Populists," New York Journal, 2 Dec. 1895, AP.

For free silver: CR, 54-1, 1895, vol. 28, pt. 1, pp. 240, 254-55, 338-41, 412, 452, 863, 907-08; pt 2, p. 1043-45, 1047-48, 1204, 1207, 1209, 1215, 1825-26; 1896, vol. 28, pt. 3, p. 2102-04, 2149-51, 2368; pt. 4, p. 3218; 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 1, p. 36; 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, pp. 310-11, 418-19; pt. 2, pp. 1675-79; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 2, pp. 1616-21; 1639-41; "The Leader of the Populists," AP; "He's Out for Silver," The Butte [Montana] Anaconda Standard, 2 Sept. 1895, AP; "Allen on Silver: The Nebraska Senator Speaks to a Large Audience [in Minneapolis]," unidentified newspaper clipping, 4 Oct. 1896, AP.

For an increase in the volume of the currency to fifty dollars per capita: CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 6, p. 5615, 5617; 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 1, p. 36; 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, pp. 418-19; pt. 2, pp. 1675-76; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 3, p. 2583; "The Cause of Labor," AP; "Allen on Silver," AP.

Against bond sales and consequent government debt (not itself a plank, but inextricably entangled with the subjects listed above; for this reason it was included as a plank in the Party's 1896 Platform): CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 1, pp. 489, 534; pt. 5, pp. 4045, 4774; pt. 6, pp. 5286, 5456, 5512-13, 5557-58, 5561-5563, 5608-19, 5781-82, 5941-44; 5983; 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, pp. 418-19, 749-50; pt. 5, 4089; 55-3, 1899, vol. 32, pt. 3, pp. 2617-18; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 2, p. 1378-85, 1436-38, 1618, 1621; pt. 3, 2581-82, 2581-84; 56-2, 1901, vol. 34, pt. 3, p. 2002; Allen, The Financial Policy, 3-8; "It Will be Interesting," Topeka Advocate, 15 Jan. 1896, AP.

For the limitation of national revenues to necessary governmental expenditures (i.e. tariffs for revenue only): CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 1, pp. 907-08; 54-2, 1896, vol. 29, pt. 1, pp. 41-45, 202-03; 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 1, pp. 464-69; Allen, Financial Policy, 11-16; "Allen on Silver," AP; "The Cause of Labor," AP. For a brief reference to Allen's opposition to an amendment aimed at providing senators with useful information on tariff-related issues, see Dorothy Ganfield Fowler, John Coit Spooner: Defender of Presidents (New York: University Publishers, 1961), 207-09.

For postal savings banks: CR, 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 1, p. 667; "The Cause of Labor," AP; "Allen Roasts Morton," AP. In February 1899, Allen read to the Senate a recent speech by Democrat John P. Altgeld, in which the former Illinois Governor expressed the view that the people were ready for, among other reforms, "postal savings banks and widening the functions of the postal department." CR, 55-3, 1899, vol. 32, pt. 2, p. 1540.

For the reclamation by the Government of monopolized and alien-owned lands for the purpose of allocation to legitimate settlers: CR, 54-2, 1897, vol. 29, pt. 1, pp. 494-95, 538-44, 714-19, 724, 791-92, 795; 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 6548; "The Cause of Labor," AP.

the Omaha Platform, and because they are among those Omaha demands which during the 1890s were never supported by either major party.[59]

Of the income tax plank it may be said, as Gene Clanton has written concerning the Omaha Platform as a whole, that it "merits more careful attention than it has received."[60] We cannot take up that gauntlet here, even for just the income tax plank. However, three points warrant brief discussion.

First, although Populist historiography includes very little discussion of the income tax plank, it was not, as an early student of the People's Party assumed, merely an "incidental scheme." This assertion was based on the fact that a Democratic congress passed an income tax provision in 1894, and presumably because the income tax was less conspicuous in Populist rhetoric than many of the other Omaha demands.[61] But the call for a graduated income tax had been part of the 1889 Northern Alliance Platform and was among the demands of the 1890 Ocala Convention.[62] As one of the Omaha demands, the idea of a graded income tax was part of a Platform which, as Robert McMath writes, "reflected decades of thought and debate."[63] Among that which emerged from this ideological evolution, as we saw in chapter three, was Senator Peffer's

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[59] Given the context in which they were drawn up, all of the Omaha demands were radical to some degree. For example, the termination of the money-issuing power of the national banks was very radical. However, in 1896 the Democratic Party also supported it. See Johnson, 98.

[60] Clanton, Congressional Populism, 20.

[61] Frank L. McVey, "The Populist Movement," Economic Studies 1 (1896): 164.

[62] Fred A Shannon, American Farmers' Movements (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1957), 148, 152.

[63] McMath, 168. For brief but useful discussions of the platform see Goodwyn, 593-96; and Norman Pollack, The Just Polity, 339-42.

introduction in 1894 of a graduated income tax amendment, which all three Populist senators voted for, including Allen.

Second, the Democratic and Populist taxes differed profoundly. The Democratic tax was a proportional tax, the purpose of which was simply to compensate for revenue losses under the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act. The Populist tax was progressive, and as such redistributive. The difference lay in the Populists' considered commitment to make economic fairness and social justice part of the revenue-raising calculus. In 1896, Populists expanded the Omaha income tax plank in order to underscore that the point of progressivity was "that aggregated wealth shall bear its just proportion of taxation."[64] In June 1896, Allen told a Populist audience in Boston that one of the "cardinal principles" of the People's Party was a graduated income tax.[65]

Third, Allen's position on the income tax was closely related to his Populistic interpretation of other issues. Prominent among these was his belief in a financial conspiracy directed against the people by the money power and in the degradation of the Supreme Court. In 1896, expanding on his running account of the plutocrats' designs for usurping most of the wealth produced the people, Allen asserted that, since 1892, two men who were nominated for the Supreme Court possessed no qualifications for the position aside from having been corporate attorneys. He argued that "by some

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[64] Johnson, 105. The only previous federal income tax, the Civil War tax (1862-1872, including its various amendments), was a progressive tax. However, the tax and its graduated structure were politically possible only because of the huge demand for revenue during the war emergency. See Steven R. Weisman, The Great Tax Wars: Lincoln to Wilson—The Fierce Battles over Money and Power That Transformed the Nation (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 26-50, 75-104.

[65] "The Cause of Labor," AP.

mysterious process" the money power was responsible for the Supreme Court's 1895 decision (*Pollock versus Farmers' Loan and Trust Company*) declaring the federal income tax unconstitutional.[66] During the *Pollock* proceedings, Allen charged, the majority justices ignored the Constitution and rendered their decisions simply on the basis of their own (upper) class interests and the heavy and corrupting influence of representatives of the money power. Allen thought the court's decision not only wrong, but also suspicious and highly unusual.[67]

It was also understandable. The plutocrats needed to have the income tax invalidated, for until that and an increase in tariff duties were accomplished the "highly protected industries could never have the people completely by the throat."[68] If they could impel the Supreme Court to nullify the tax, the rich would avoid tax liabilities on their vast fortunes. "Then they would put the final nail in the political coffin of the industrial slave and make him bear the full burden for all time."[69]

Allen clearly understood the connection between the income tax and the tariff. The debate over schedules as conducted by the major parties was "a false issue," of little consequence "compared with the great issue of monetary reform."[70] Yet *outside* of the debate over free trade versus protectionism, the tariff was important. It was a regressive tax paid disproportionately by the poor. The progressive income tax sought to correct the

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[66] *Pollock v. Farmers' Loan and Trust Co., 158 U.S. 601, 1895.* Allen, Financial Policy, 9, 10 (for quotation). For a recent overview of the context and disposition of the case, see Weisman, 146-61.

[67] Ibid., 10-11.

[68] Ibid., 9.

[69] Ibid., 10.

imbalance by bringing the tax obligations of the wealthy more in line with their ability to pay. The shared core of these issues was whether the rich or the poor would finance the necessary expenses of the federal government.[71] Allen's references to the excessive tax burden carried by the people, along with his support for the graded income tax, suggests that like other Populists such as Thomas L. Nugent of Texas, he saw the tax as the proper alternative to the protective tariff.[72] Put the country "on a sound financial basis, where it is able to meet taxation successfully, and the tariff question will disappear."[73]

Referring to American Populists in general as well as Texas Populists in particular, Roscoe Martin writes that Populists became "bitter critics" of the Supreme Court when it handed down the *Pollock* decision.[74] As Norman Pollack observes, Populists lamented the Court's growing solicitude for the interests of business and criticized the Court for its rightward shift. "They did so not out of cynicism or a disregard for the Court's function, but because they had a deep respect for its potentiality as the bulwark of popular rights."[75] In his remarks to the Senate on the *Pollock* decision, Allen asserted that the people had "lost confidence" in the nation's highest judicial

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[70] Ibid., 11.

[71] Ibid., 9-11; Susannah Camic, review of The Great Tax Wars, by Steven Weisman, the yale review of books 6 (winter 2003): http://www.yalereviewofbooks.com/archive/winter03/review04.shtml.htm

[72] Pollack, The Just Polity, 272.

[73] Allen, The Financial Policy, 11.

[74] Roscoe Martin, The People's Party in Texas: A Study in Third Party Politics (1933; reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 52.

[75] Pollack, The Just Polity, 63, 64 (for quotation).

body.[76] Three weeks later (May 1896), Allen introduced a bill for a constitutional amendment that would necessitate a unanimous ruling of the Supreme Court to nullify any federal law.[77] In March 1897, he resubmitted the proposal, and at the same time offered a bill to limit the jurisdiction of the Federal courts and another "to prevent the abuse of legal processes by United States courts and judges thereof."[78]

Speaking in the Senate in March 1898, Allen averred that, unless adequately restrained, the railroad companies would come to "own" the Federal Government.[79] Supposedly state governments and the Interstate Commerce Commission regulated the railroads, but Allen declared the effort to rein in railroad abuses through public oversight a failure. "I would be willing here to wait half an hour," he said, "for any Senator in this Chamber to point out where a railroad has ever been controlled by legislation, State or national."

> We have Interstate Commerce Commissioners. We are paying them large salaries. They have a large retinue of clerks and subordinates under them. Pray, what are they doing for the country and for the shipper? Absolutely nothing. They do not make an order that is obeyed by a railroad company unless the railroad company sees fit to obey it. They are as powerless and impotent as a

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[76] Allen, "Financial Policy," 11. Dissatisfaction with the Supreme Court, which some Alliance newspapers in Nebraska had taken to calling the "'American Bastille,'" had been growing for at least twenty years and was fairly widespread even before the *Pollock* case. The income tax ruling exacerbated it. See Alan Furman Westin, "The Supreme Court, the Populist Movement and the Campaign of 1896," The Journal of Politics 15 (Feb. 1953): 3-41 (for quotation, ibid., 20).

[77] CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 6, p. 5441. For more on Allen's criticism of the courts, see chapter three above, pp. 17 (fn. 44), 50 (fn. 129).

[78] CR, 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 1, p. 36.

[79] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 3, p. 2460.

> babe in its cradle to control these corporations, which run riot over the people and over the commissioners.[80]

The only workable solution, as he said on at least ten separate occasions between 1895 and 1901, was government ownership.[81] In 1900, he emphasized that he favored "not control simply, but Government ownership--of railroads, telegraphs, telephones, and all natural and exclusive monopolies."[82]

Allen argued that nationalization of the railroads would solve several significant problems. First, it would put an end to the dual problem of overcapitalization of the railway companies and the excessive rates they charged. Because the railroads were valued at less than half of their actual worth, the freight and passenger rates designed to reflect the fictitious value of the companies were higher than justified. Under government ownership the watering of stock would be impossible, as there would be no shares to overvalue and no debt to finance. In order to highlight the idea that railroad owners practiced "a wholesale system of spoliation," Allen described a hypothetical scenario. Were the government to experiment with owning one transcontinental line,

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[80] Ibid., p. 2462. In 1897, two U.S. Supreme Court decisions severely restricted the rate-regulating powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Harold U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion: 1890-1900 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 78-79.

[81] Ibid., pp. 2416, 2461-62. See also CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 1, pp. 738-39; 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 3, pp. 2609-32 (especially 2618-19, 2632); 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 420-23; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 3, p. 2376; "Allen Tired of its Harping," AP; "Allen Roasts Morton," AP; "The Leader of the Populists," AP; "Tinged with Populism," The Butte Miner, 3 Sept. 1895, AP. Significantly, before a Populist audience just seven weeks prior to the 1896 People's Party National Convention, Allen made a special point of emphasizing the need to nationalize the railroads. Needless to say, this hardly fits with the usual image of Allen as a one-plank Populist. "The Cause of Labor," AP.

[82] CR, 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 3, p. 2376. For other expressions of Allen's support for the nationalization of the telephone and telegraph systems, see CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 420; pt. 3, p. 2461; 55-3, vol. 32, pt. 1, p. 359; "The Cause of Labor," AP; "Allen Roasts Morton," AP; "Tinged with Populism," AP.

either through appropriation of a private railway or its own construction, and setting its passenger and freight rates, after competitive rate adjustments by the private carriers, the entire railroad rate problem would be rectified. Then, Allen claimed, "you would see the water jumping out of the railroad stocks higher than the geysers of the West."[83] Government ownership would also put an end to the "deplorable" state of affairs in which large numbers of railroad employees were coerced into voting for political candidates as dictated by their employers.[84] Finally, it would solve the dilemma of what to do about railroads, such as the Union Pacific, that had defaulted on Federal loans.[85]

Allen defended the viability of nationalization by reading a long list of countries, including Belgium, Germany, Italy, Norway, and Australia, that had implemented government ownership. Many countries owned their entire railroad system and the vast majority of nations owned at least some of their railways. Allen claimed that European governments operated their roads more cheaply and at less cost to the public than private companies did in the United States. Moreover, several states in the United States had or were currently experimenting with government ownership.[86] This trend was occurring because a railroad is "a great natural monopoly" in which everyone had an interest.

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[83] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 3, p. 2462. See also CR, 54-2, 1897, vol. 29, pt. 2, p. 1291; CR, 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 3, p. 2625; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 1, p. 763. For a brief and interesting discussion that shows one Populist's perspective on the railroad overcapitalization problem, see William A. Peffer, "The Mission of the Populist Party," The Review of Reviews 9 (Jan. 1894): 76, reprinted from the North American Review.

[84] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 3, p. 2462. For an example of Allen's support of efforts to prevent the cheating of railroad workers out of their pay by their employers, see ibid., p. 2416.

[85] CR, 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 3, pp. 2612-25, 2630-32. See also Clanton, Congressional Populism, 123-125.

Therefore, the government "not only has the right, but it [has] a duty to its citizens" to nationalize the industry.[87] There is, Allen asserted, no possible counter-argument "except that prompted by greed, except that argument that is all-powerful and all-potent in the Congress...that a few corporations must have an opportunity to fleece the people at their will."[88] During an 1898 consideration of a grant of a railroad right-of-way in Alaska, a committee amendment reserving the right of the Federal Government to assume ownership of railroads falling under the larger legislation was voted down forty-eight to seven. Populists, Allen among them, accounted for four of the seven votes in the minority.[89]

On the important foreign policy matters surrounding the Spanish-American War, Allen, like most congressional Populists, nearly always took positions consistent with anti-imperialism and the observance of human rights.[90] He staunchly advocated Cuban independence, accused American bondholders and business interests of opposing Cuban independence for their own financial gain, supported the war against Spain, bitterly opposed the annexation of Hawaii, affirmed the ability of Cubans and Filipinos to govern themselves, and condemned the American war against the Filipinos.[91]

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[86] CR, 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 3, p. 2617.

[87] Ibid., 2618.

[88] Ibid., 2619.

[89] CR, 55-2, vol. 31, pt. 3, p. 2463. Senator Kyle did not vote. By this time he might not have still considered himself a Populist. See chapter one above, p. 10, fn. 20.

[90] On Populists as typically anti-imperialist, see Clanton, Congressional Populism, 137-162.

[91] CR, 55-2, 1897, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 40; 1898, vol. 31, pt. 4, pp. 3410-3413; pt. 5, pp. 4108-10; pt. 7, pp. 6634-51; 55-3, 1899, vol. 32, pt. 1, p. 563; pt. 2, pp. 1481-83, 1731; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 4, pp.

Perhaps it is best to end this chapter (and with it our analysis of Allen's Senate record) as we began it, with Allen echoing Lincoln in Populist fashion. We cannot ignore, Allen told the Senate in 1898, "the fact that the money power dominates every branch of the Government, while the people are deceived into believing that this is a popular government, in which they have a full share." Rather, it is "a government by the few and for the few." The mission of the People's Party is

> To call back the spirit of departed patriotism as it existed a century ago; it is its aim and purpose to have a government of the people, for the people, and by the people, in which all invidious class distinctions shall be put aside, and where men and women shall be known and respected for their character and intelligence and not for the paltry dollars they carry in their pockets.[92]

3037-38, 3269, 3272, 3554-59; pt. 7, pp. 6670-71, 6674. Although he argued that the principles of the Declaration of Independence applied to "all men, under whatever sun they might be born or on whatever soil they might live," Allen's foreign policy views revealed a considerable racist streak. Among his major objections to Hawaiian annexation in particular, and American imperialism in general, was the prospect that they would lead to the immigration of "15,000,000 people belonging to alien races, the most of them ignorant, brutal, hostile, and savage, and reduce the standard of our home civilization to that of a low and brutal Asiatic population." His racist comments, it needs to be said, very often emphasized what he saw as the likely detrimental effects on American workers of immigrant labor. CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 4, p. 3412; pt. 7, 6634, 6642-43. See also CR, 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 1, p. 847. On the issue of race, Allen's attitude toward Native Americans appears to have been relatively enlightened. Allen knew many Indians in Nebraska, seems to have been genuinely concerned for their welfare, and on a number of occasions in the Senate defended the treaty rights of Native Americans. On the other hand, he voted for at least one proposal to open part of a tribal reservation to white settlement, and his comments concerning Native Americans were sometimes unmistakably, though apparently unintentionally, condescending. CR, 54-1, 1896, vol. 28, pt. 3, p. 2585; 54-2, 1897, vol. 29, pt. 3, p. 2047; 55-1, 1897, vol. 30, pt. 1, p. 37; 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 2, p. 1618, pp. 2658-60; 55-3, 1899, vol. 32, pt. 1, p. 649; pt. 2, pp. 1603-05; 56-1, 1900, vol. 33, pt. 4, 3879-82.

[92] CR, 55-2, 1898, vol. 31, pt. 1, p. 419.

CONCLUSION

The Populism of William V. Allen: An Assessment

> Movements of "the people" against "the special interests" take many forms. It will no longer do for us to dismiss as "false consciousness" or "shadow movements" those aspects of populism that fail to meet our expectation for the populist legacy.
>
> Robert McMath, "Populism in Two Countries"[1]

Throughout his tenure as a United States Senator, William Allen professed to being committed to the principles and goals of the People's Party. In the Senate he made vigorous attempts to bring about every reform explicitly demanded in the Omaha Platform. While his political activities and relationships outside the Senate require further study, nothing we have seen in that area undermines the only plausible conclusion suggested by the evidence examined here: that Allen was undeniably a principled Populist.

He was also a persistent one. After the conclusion of his Senate service in 1901, Allen returned to the practice of law in his hometown of Madison, Nebraska. Thinking he could juggle two careers, he started a weekly newspaper, The Madison Mail. While the inaugural issue of the Mail (17 January 1902) is now lost, it is clear that Allen

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[1] Robert C. McMath, Jr., "Populism in Two Countries: Agrarian Protest in the Great Plains and Prairie Provinces," Agricultural History 69 (1995): 546. Norman Pollack: "In a diverse movement such as Populism, any standard of orthodoxy proves mischievous." The Humane Economy: Populism, Capitalism, and Democracy (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 95.

intended it as a Populist organ.[2] On local matters, the paper was a forceful critic of the Republican administration of Nebraska Governor Ezra P. Savage.[3] Allen conferred with, supported, and universally endorsed Populist and Fusionist office-seekers, offered print space to People's Party officials, and worked to persuade rural voters, the majority of whom were presumed to be receptive to Populist proposals, to go to the polls at election time.[4]

Speaking to the nexus between local conditions and national issues, Allen warned his readership about the likely outcome of the farmers' current planting efforts. He predicted that, come harvest time, farmers would not see the benefits of their labor because trusts would usurp the profits, "leaving the farmer enough to keep soul and body together so he can plant a crop next year."[5]

The evils of the trusts, as well as the failure of Theodore Roosevelt's administration to adequately constrain them, were consistent themes in the Mail.[6] So were the injustices of the protective tariff, the need to expand the money supply, and sympathy for the striking anthracite coal workers in Pennsylvania.[7] Allen continually

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[2] The Madison Mail, 24 Jan., 31 Jan., 1902. The cost of a yearly subscription was $1.50, but an alternative plan offered three months of the Mail and one year of William Jennings Bryan's The Commoner for $1.00.

[3] Ibid., 29 Aug. 1902.

[4] Ibid., 2 May, 9 May 1902, 27 June-14 Nov. 1902. In Nebraska, Fusionist candidates were backed by temporary coalitions of Populists and Democrats. Robert W. Cherny, Populism, Progressivism, and the Transformation of Nebraska Politics, 1885-1915 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 87-88, 96.

[5] Ibid., 16 May 1902.

[6] Ibid., 24 Jan., 26 Sept. 1902.

[7] Ibid., 24 Jan., 4 July, 19 Dec. 1902; 9 Jan., 16 Jan. 1903.

railed against the "money power," which, true to its plutocratic values, employed corrupt and evil tactics aimed at furthering "the commercial interests of the eastern seaboard."[8]

Convinced that America's problems required decisive action, Allen called for government ownership of "all public utilities, such as railroads, telegraphs, telephones, water works, electric light systems, and ... coal mines."[9] He repeatedly denounced administration policy in the Philippines and argued that the people of that archipelago should be granted political independence.[10]

Despite claiming to have more subscribers than either of his two local competitors, Allen quickly determined that the paper was a luxury he could not afford to maintain. Citing the "exacting" demands of his legal practice, on 20 February 1903, he announced the consolidation of the Mail with the Bryanite-Democratic Madison Star.[11]

In 1903, Allen published an article in The Arena titled "Necessity for the People's Party." The party was needed, he wrote, because of the innumerable "evils" which neither of the major parties were capable of eradicating. These included the issue power of the national banks, the oppression of laboring people, government subsidies to corporations, government bond issues, price-fixing in the railroad and ocean transportation industries, excessive railroad and telegraph rates, widespread absentee ownership of land, and the monopolization of the press and censorship of news. Such

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[8] Ibid., 16 May, 17 Oct. 1902.

[9] Ibid., 31 Oct. 1902.

[10] Ibid., 9 May-19 Sept. 1902.

[11] Ibid., 9 Jan., 20 Feb. 1903.

evils, Allen wrote, nullify republicanism and prop up monarchism and aristocracy, "while enriching privileged classes and giving to wealth the power to debauch or corrupt government and enchain the people." Only through immediate reforms, including government ownership of the railroads and telegraph systems, could the iniquities be arrested.[12]

Long after most Populists had returned to their former parties, Allen stayed with the People's Party. In 1903, he participated in a Populist mid-roaders conference in Denver.[13] In 1904, Allen attended two Nebraska state Populist conventions. At the first, where he was "the leading figure," he introduced a resolution, which passed soundly, calling on the national party to nominate its own candidates for president and vice-president.[14] At the second, he served as chairman.[15] At the party's national convention held July 5-6 at Springfield, Illinois, Allen was runner-up for the presidential nomination.

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[12] William V. Allen, "Necessity for the People's Party," The Arena 30 (Oct. 1903): 410-14 (quotation on 413). Under government ownership, Allen later wrote, the railroads "would not be a menace to the public; but in private hands they are." William V. Allen, letter, The [Nebraska] Independent, 4 Aug. 1904.

[13] Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 558. Goodwyn writes that Allen had concluded "the policy of fusion had been a mistake." Ibid. There is no compelling reason to believe this, however. Doubtless Allen was paying close attention to the takeover of the Democratic Party by conservatives. On the steadily declining fortunes of William Jennings Bryan and his followers between 1900 and 1904, see Louis W. Koenig, Bryan: A Political Biography of William Jennings Bryan (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 366-74.

[14] Addison E. Sheldon, "Nebraskans I Have Known," Nebraska History 19 (1938): 202. The convention was held 21 June 1904 at Fremont, Nebraska. Ibid.; University of Nebraska, Nebraska Party Platforms, 1858-1938 ed. John G.W. Lewis (Works Projects Administration, 1940), 287.

[15] Nebraska Party Platforms, 287-88. This convention was held on 10 Aug. 1904 at Lincoln, Nebraska.

On the first (and apparently only) ballot Allen received 308 votes and Thomas Watson of Georgia 333 votes.[16]

According to Nebraska historian Addison Sheldon, Allen's place in the movement "was rather over on the conservative side." Allen was selected to chair state conventions of the party "in order to use his prestige and ability to quiet the outbreaks of the radicals and secure union of discordant elements." The ultimate aim, Sheldon writes, was "the election of W.J. Bryan as president and the union of all elements in a reborn and reinspired Democratic Party" advancing to the accomplishment of "great social reforms in the interest of the people."[17]

Sheldon, himself formerly a mid-road Populist, reflects that in the final analysis Allen was "an outstanding contribution to the people's cause in an epic period of American history." Allen "was not an advance scout nor the leader of a forlorn hope in the attack upon vested wrong or class privilege."

> But he was a tower of strength in the main battle. He had breadth of vision and balanced judgment. He was a conservative leader in a radical cause. His presence upon the floor of the United States Senate gave the representatives of the selfish ruling class the greatest shock of those embattled years. He was simple and dignified in conduct, open in mind to the poorest citizen, a firm friend and fearless champion.[18]

That Allen was a Populist has been established. Was he, as Sheldon and other historians have thought, a "conservative" one?[19]

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[16] Sheldon, 202.

[17] Ibid., 200-01.

[18] Ibid., 203.

[19] See Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America: Midwestern Populist Thought (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962), 51; Ronald J.Fahl, review of Western

The evidence shows that he was not, and that in fact he was in the mainstream of the movement.[20] Let us explore the question from several perspectives. First, consider John Hicks' interpretation of the essence of Populism. Its philosophical core consisted of two basic principles: that the government ought to check the exploitation of the poor by those seeking to profit thereby, and that the polity must be republican rather than plutocratic.[21] As we have seen, Allen was a consistent and emphatic proponent of political equality and economic justice. The many arguments he made for the Omaha demands reveal a devoted antimonopolist and dedicated republican.[22]

Populism, Pacific Northwest Quarterly 69 (July 1978), 138. For other post-Senate views of Allen, see the long newspaper article by Richard L. Metcalfe, "A Glowing Tribute to Senator Allen," unidentified newspaper clipping, n.d. with dateline 4 Oct. 1911, AP; "Notes from the Capital: William V. Allen," The Nation, 2 Dec. 1915.

[20] Allen did hold conservative and, in some respects, regressive views in two areas of interest. One, as we have seen, was with regard to race. His racist attitude regarding non-white peoples grew worse after his return to private life. The man who, in 1898, had quoted the Declaration of Independence in arguing for the rights of the Cuban people to self-government, in 1902 called for the annexation of the island in order to make it "the dumping ground for the surplus negro population of the country." Blacks were "a menace to the peace, order and civilization of many of the southern states." Madison Mail, 4 July 1902. The other was his apparent lack of enthusiasm for woman suffrage. Although many Populists supported woman suffrage, particularly in Kansas, North Dakota, Colorado, and the West, the national party's unwillingness to formally support it made a mockery of its professed commitment to equality. Research for this study found only the following report of Allen's views by journalist Albert Shaw: he supported the current limited suffrage in Nebraska whereby women were eligible to vote in school elections. Regarding full suffrage, Allen had always believed that "women ought to be allowed to vote if they desired the ballot, while on the other hand it ought not to be forced on them against their wishes." Albert Shaw, "William V. Allen: A Populist. A Character Sketch and Interview," Review of Reviews 10 (July 1894): 41. For brief accounts of the Populists and the woman suffrage question, see Gene Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890-1900 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 137-38, 141-42; Robert C. McMath, Jr., American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 170-71.

[21] John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party (1931; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 406.

[22] On the Populists as "only the largest and most successful of a series" of Gilded Age "egalitarian movements that shared a common spirit rooted in the republican ideology of the American Revolution," see Worth Robert Miller, "The Republican Tradition," in American Populism, ed. William F. Holmes (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 209-214. By "republicanism," Miller refers to the founding fathers' ideal of a society based on personal liberty, in which the function of government was to further those "social conditions that would aid the individual's God-given right to self-

Second, he favored without qualification all of the definite demands of the Omaha Platform, including the radical national bank and graduated income tax proposals, as well as all of the supplemental resolutions. Significantly, Allen's initial, hesitant acceptance of the call for nationalization of the railroads occurred the same year (1894) as the beginning of the silver craze, and his commitment to this socialistic reform solidified during the period (1894-1896) when agitation for silver and the support of fusion grew to their ultimate heights. Moreover, like many Populists, Allen was deeply concerned about the plight of labor (the largest subject in the Platform without a corresponding plank), and he made many efforts to improve conditions for workers.

Regarding free silver, Allen understood, as Elizabeth Sanders has written concerning the silver program in general, that it was "more than an empty panacea."[23] Like many Populists, Allen saw silver as an effective remedy for deflation and tight money. And perhaps he was right. According to Sanders, the general price stability that free silver coinage likely would have produced

> might have saved many thousands of farmers from crushing debt loads and descent into tenancy and sharecropping. The 'automatic' aspect of coinage on demand also promised to wrest control of money creation from banks and

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fulfillment....It dictated the rejection of any social development that encouraged the debasement of any human." Such an outlook "naturally had special appeal to those who saw themselves as victims of the contemporary system." Ibid., 210. Miller apparently has in mind that strain of Revolutionary era thought that emphasized both equality of opportunity and the recognition of talent. As Gordon Wood writes, the Revolutionary leaders hoped for the realization of the "beautiful but ambiguous ideal" of a fair and roughly egalitarian society "where none would be too rich or too poor," and whose people, it was thought, "would readily accede to such distinctions as emerged as long as they were fairly earned." Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 70-75 (quotation on 73). On the Populists as ideological descendents of Revolutionary republicanism, see Charles Maurice Wiltse, The Jeffersonian Tradition in American Democracy (1935; reprint, New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1960), 250-55 (Allen is discussed briefly on 254).

[23] Elizabeth Sanders, Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 137.

> bondholders and their allies in the Treasury Department. These were no small aims.[24]

As "hard" money, silver "could accomplish many of the purposes of greenback printing without the 'fiat money' ideological baggage."[25]

After the mixed results of the 1894 elections, in which the Populist vote increased overall but declined significantly in Kansas, North Dakota, and several western states, the majority of Populists reasoned that the best thing to do was to "raise the flag of silver to broaden [the party's] electoral base."[26] Because silver and fusion seemed to open the possibility for the realization of some of the Omaha demands, in 1896 Allen embraced this pragmatic position. However, in doing so he did not find it necessary to discard the rest of the Omaha Platform.[27]

Third, Allen carried the Populist standard well after most Populists had laid it down. That a marginally-committed, conservative Populist would stay with the party through its long twilight seems doubtful.

Fourth, employing Norman Pollack's informal but useful left/center/right typology of Populism, we see that Allen falls squarely in the middle category. Among the features of "right Populism" were a "narrow construction of antimonopolism because

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[24] Ibid., 137-38.

[25] Ibid., 138.

[26] Ibid., 137. For a recent summary of Allen's political career that is sympathetic to his support of fusion, see Scott Steven Swingle, "Allen, William Vincent," in John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds., American National Biography, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 351.

[27] Populist and labor leader Eugene Debs supported William Jennings Bryan for President in 1896, because free silver "gave us not only a rallying cry, but afforded common ground upon which the common people could unite against the trusts, syndicates, corporations, monopolies—in a word, the money power." Quoted in Sanders, 139.

of its mistrust of the powers of government," a "cursory treatment of...the problems of labor," and a "valuing of authority [that] encouraged deference, not only to law and order, but also to the class system."[28] These do not apply to Allen.

Two other "right" characteristics require a bit of elaboration. According to Pollack, "right Populism" felt a strong "respect for the past" and refrained from a serious critique of industrialism.[29] Allen did revere the past, but it was less the Gilded Age than the early national and antebellum eras, the period of working republicanism, that he hearkened back to.[30] In this regard he was a typical Populist. And while Allen apparently never conducted a penetrating critical analysis of the industrial structure, the initiation of such critiques was not a characteristic feature of the Populist center but of the small Populist left epitomized by Henry Demarest Lloyd of Illinois.[31]

The Populist center or "centrist reformism," which for Pollack includes James Weaver, William Peffer, and Ignatius Donnelly, emphasized commitments to a Constitutional focus where political rights and obligations were concerned, and a "balance [of] the claims of capital with the needs of the community" and the expansion of opportunity for the middle and lower classes in the economic realm. It rejected

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[28] Pollack, The Humane Economy, 97-98.

[29] Ibid., 97, 98 (for quotation).

[30] Allen revered the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and what he sought was a return to what we might call his political first principles as he interpreted them from those documents. One does not find in Allen a belief in, or wish to return to, a past agrarian utopia. On the agrarian myth, see Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 23-59.

[31] On the Populist left see ibid., 96-98. On Populism and industrialism, see Pollack, The Populist Response; Samuel Emlen Walker, "Populism and Industrialism: The Ideology of the Official Organ of the Nebraska Populist Movement," (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1970).

socialism, but demanded a "publicly based ...political economy."[32] Allen's support of the platform demands, and his arguments justifying them, put him squarely in this category.[33] This makes sense too, given that, when one considers what Allen and Peffer stood for, the similarities are far greater than the differences.[34]

It also makes sense, finally, in terms of how Allen viewed conservatism. As we saw in chapter three, as a Constitutionalist and republican he thought of Populism, as other Populists did, as conservative in a qualified sense. He utterly rejected the conservatism characteristic of the other parties. In February 1900, during a speech in which he implored the Senate not to destroy the remaining greenback currency, he said

> I understand in some sections of the country it is held to be a crime to be an agitator. They look upon a man who is called an agitator as a man who is fit to be expelled from society and deprived of his citizenship.
>
> I thank God I am an agitator. I delight in being called an agitator. Agitation is life, motion, energy, and success. If you point me to a man who is called conservative, I will point you to a man whose powers, mental, moral, or physical, are on the road to decay. A man who does nothing and never thinks except when provoked by abnormal circumstances, who is satisfied with himself...is of no value in this world and will not be in the next.

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[32] Ibid., 96.

[33] A more elaborate typology is offered in James M. Youngdale, Populism: A Psychohistorical Perspective (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975) 119-49. With important differences, its categories ("Tory Populism," "Radical Neomercantilism," and "Socialist Populism") roughly correspond to Pollack's right/center/left division. Radical neomercantilism, a halfway point between the Tories and the Socialists, sought "the regulation of business and [was] for interfering in the free market with a leveling intent rather than simply with an intent of rationalizing and smoothing out the economy in the interests of corporate business, which was the chief aim of the progressives." Ibid., 141. Youngdale's neomercantalist category, which otherwise fits Allen perfectly, includes espousal of the subtreasury plan. As we have seen, however, it had relatively little support among Populists after 1892. See Hicks, 186-204.

[34] This conclusion is based on the findings of this study and the information and insights available in the following works: Gene Clanton, Congressional Populism and the Crisis of the 1890s (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); William A. Peffer, Populism, Its Rise and Fall, ed. Peter H. Argersinger (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Peter H. Argersinger, Populism and Politics: William Alfred Peffer and the People's Party (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974).

A great many such men...have not had an intelligent thought pass through their minds in a third of a century. They are mere inert matter, a drag, a dead weight. They desire to be called conservative. It is more polite to be a conservative than an agitator, you know. Every evolution in mental and physical science, every discovery in the various departments of progress...has been through agitation and investigation....So, Mr. President, I am an agitator.[35]

[35] Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 1st sess., 1900, vol. 33, pt. 2, pp. 1618-19.

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